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ABSTRACT

The Bodh approach to primary education in India focuses on community and parental involvement, including home visits by teachers, training of community women to be para-teachers for preschools, and parent-teacher meetings. The curriculum is activity-oriented, incorporates a flexible age/grade matrix, and includes culturally relevant experiences. Planning and documentation include annual teacher planning workshops, daily teacher journals, and frequent training workshops. This project adapted the Bodh educational approach for selected Indian government primary schools, provided training to government teachers, and developed a teachers' initiative to design, develop, and implement the curriculum. The project conducted action research to document the efforts. Findings indicated that teacher turnover was high due primarily to marriage and family needs. The preschool program has effectively used community-based human resources and has fulfilled the project objective of implementing a low-cost, community-based preschool in urban slums. The curriculum has made good use of traditional languages/dialects, games, songs, and stories. A locally appropriate training approach respects the needs of teacher trainees. Implementation of the program in 10 government schools is in the pilot phase--agreements have been reached with the government officials, teachers have been recruited and trained, and the program has been started in two classes. The program is being adapted for the government school environment and has involved working with several levels of bureaucracy to gain allies to break down resistance to change. (Includes recommendations regarding Bodh initiatives, the slum schools, the adoption program, Bodh as an organization, training, and necessary research studies.) (KB)

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INNOVATIVE APPROACHES

IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Evaluation Report

prepared for the Aga Khan Foundation

by

Dr. Mala Khullar and Dr. Shyam Menon

September 1996

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PREFACE

This report is the outcome of an evaluation exercise, sponsored by the Aga Khan Foundation (India) in September-October 1996. We identified the following key questions underlying the Terms of Reference given to us by the Aga Khan Foundation (India):

1. Describe the key questions of the Bodh approach as it has developed in the course of the project?

2. To what extent have the original objectives of the project been fulfilled?

3. Is there a shared philosophy and understanding underlying the objectives and strategies at different levels of staff, beneficiaries, board members and other stakeholders?

4. What is the quality of the project teams?

5. Record the development of the adoption programme. In what way has the Bodh formula been adapted for application in this context?

6. What are the outcomes of the project? In what way do these fulfill project objectives?

7. In what way is the organization moving and setting directions for the future?

8. What prospects does the organization have for sustainability in financial and programmatic terms?

9. Analyse the comparative costs of running the slum schools and the adoption programme. Is there greater benefit to be derived from one or the other?

10. What demonstrable lessons does this project experience illustrate for replication purposes?

11. What role has AKF(I) played in the development of the organization and project?

12. What impact has the project had on parents and community members?

13. Record perceptions of government personnel and teachers about the project?

14. In the light of answers to the above questions identify directions for the future of the project.

15. Recommend ways in which the design and implementation of the project can be improved, keeping its objectives and outcomes in mind.

On the basis of the above we proceeded to ask questions and locate the appropriate data at the field level. We approached the organization and its

functionaries to direct us to the relevant sites and did not use a questionnaire or schedule for the purpose. We sought their perceptions on every aspect of the project and organization and in turn interpreted these in the light of our observations of the empirical situation. We had intensive discussions with Bodh's coordinator, the core group of functionaries, some core group and executive committee members, teachers of the slum schools, Bodh and government teachers in the adoption programme. The organization is remarkably transparent and was open to addressing various problematic issues in the spirit of seeking solutions. It has very detailed documentation on most areas it works in, its staff and other deployment and so we relied on them for much of the quantitative information.

We also had discussions with school heads, the district education officer in charge of the adoption programme and a steering committee member for the adoption programme. We observed and participated in meetings of government school heads, mother teachers, and a presentation on a research study commissioned by Bodh. In addition we were observers at a parent teacher meeting held at one of the adoption programme schools.

We visited three slum schools where we observed classroom situations - both pre-school and primary; observed meetings of the *mahila* and *kishori samoohs* (women's and adolescent girls' groups); talked to individual teachers about their perception of the children they worked with; and examined some of the children's work and the teacher's diaries. Since we had to ration our time, we were unable to visit all the Bodh schools. Of the adoption schools also we were able to visit three, although we would have liked to visit all 10.

Our conclusions, therefore, had to be based to some extent on the perceptions conveyed to us by the organization's teams, which we have tried to corroborate with our own observations and interpretations. These are based on our notions about what constitutes good practice and judgements about the organization and its programmes. We have tried to substantiate our opinions, giving concrete reasons, to the extent of providing somewhat lengthy descriptions of actual situations as we encountered them. Nonetheless, we do realize that there are inevitable limitations of subjectivity. We shared an earlier draft of this report with Bodh Shiksha Samiti (Bodh) and AKF(I) to clarify our perceptions and made suitable modifications as needed. The opinions expressed in the report, however, are our own and not necessarily those of AKF(I) or Bodh.

This evaluation has been an intense learning experience for us and we are grateful to Aga Khan Foundation (India) for giving us the opportunity. We owe many thanks to the children, teachers and communities who are part of the Bodh initiative for making this an invigorating experience. The Bodh family and their associates, including the district education officer, government school teachers and other persons interacted with us in an open manner, which we appreciate very much. Their attitude made our work a stimulating and pleasant experience and we wish the entire Bodh collective the very best.

Acknowledgement

AKF(I) gratefully acknowledges the support from the co-funders of the project, the British Overseas Development Administration (ODA) and the Bernard van Leer Foundation without whose assistance this innovative work could not have been carried out.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the mid-eighties Bodh Shiksha Samiti (Bodh), begun as an initiative for providing primary school education to children of the urban poor in the slums of Jaipur, Rajasthan. Starting with one school in a single slum, the work has over the years expanded to seven slums. External funding for the programme was initially given by the Education Department, Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), of the Government of India in 1988-89. In 1993, Bodh's preschools were started within their existing school centres, with a grant from the Aga Khan Foundation(India), initially for a pilot project, followed by a three-year project grant. Bodh now runs three programmes: the **Primary School Programme** which caters to over 1000 children (6-14 years) in the slums; the **Pre-school Programme** which serves 662 children (3-6 years); and the **Adoption Programme,** whereby Bodh has since 1995 been disseminating its innovative educational methods in 10 state schools of Jaipur on a pilot basis. The first of these programmes is still supported by the MHRD and the latter two are being funded by AKF(I).

The approaches developed by Bodh over the years place great significance on **community and parental involvement** in the education of their children. All the space for the school centres in the slums has been provided by the residents themselves, many of whom have made contributions of time, money and labour for constructing sheds wherever shelter is not available. Others have made community areas or rooms in their homes available for the schools. The slum-level programmes for primary and pre-school education also include an input for women's participation in the way of *mahila samoohs* (women's groups), which assemble everyday not only to support their children's education but also to gain literacy and other skills themselves. In addition the Bodh teachers spend an hour everyday on home visits, whereby they gain intimate knowledge about the children's lives and homes. Some community women, through association in the *mahila samoohs*, have been effectively trained into para-teachers or mother teachers, as they are called, for the pre-schools. Older children from the community have also been similarly associated in the pre-schools as 'child teachers'. In some localities adolescent girls are provided inputs of education via *kishori samoohs* (girls' groups). In the adoption programme the principle of community involvement is being incorporated through parent-teacher meetings and home visits.

The **curriculum and practice** evolved and operationalised in the Bodh approach seeks to make education interesting, activity-oriented and thus rejects rote learning. Bodh follows a flexible age/grade matrix. There are no rigidly defined classes but only loosely constituted *samoohs* (groups) based roughly on age and ability. The system also allows for periodic re-grouping on the basis of assessment of capabilities. The *samooh* or group system seems to work well in the slum schools, where there is space to accommodate such flexibility, which the adoption programme schools seem to lose to some extent. The Bodh curriculum attempts to use what the child is capable of and familiar with as a starting point. It includes culturally familiar experiences of songs, stories and games, while the "hard" components of the curriculum, such as mathematics, are taught through pedagogic devices like games which the children are used to, and objects which they play with. The pedagogy adopted in the pre-school and early-primary classes is largely play-centred and activity-oriented and teaching is done in an integrated manner. The schools in the adoption programme, which is so far operational in classes 1 and 2 in 10 government schools, have been quite

receptive to the new curriculum but some modifications have been introduced especially in the assessment methods.

Planning and documentation are integral to the Bodh approach. All teachers meet for an annual workshop to plan and reflect on the previous year's experience and planning for the current year, where they decide on the broad strategies, curricular sequencing, and so on. Apart from this, the teachers maintain daily diaries and meet regularly for a fortnightly workshop, where they share their experiences in greater detail for planning the teaching-learning activities for the next fortnight. Some of the government teachers in the adoption programme are trying hard to meet these exacting requirements, while others have felt these diaries and meetings were sometimes too demanding.

The effectiveness of Bodh's operations is determined through its **training**, which develops in the teachers the required competence, motivation and 'the right kind of attitude'. This needs an intense induction or training programme which aims not merely at developing in the participants a repertoire of knowledge and skills, but also in sowing in them the seeds of healthy scepticism about what has long been taken for granted about education, school and children. It provides them with an opportunity go debate and dialogue on the various issues related to children, community, schooling, curriculum, pedagogy and so on. The slum schools have been attracting people with varying backgrounds for different reasons. Some had responded to advertisements seeking just another job, while others have heard of Bodh and want to participate in their activities. Most teachers are young women graduates, selected after a fairly thorough screening. The school adoption programme, on the other hand, has made it necessary for Bodh to bring government teachers into their fold, most of whom were nominated by the state department of education. In contrast, those who undergo training as mother and child teachers have had prior acquaintance with Bodh through the *mahila samoohs* and schools. Most women who get trained as Mother Teachers are illiterate, many have acquired literacy and numeracy skills at the *mahila samoohs*. But their other talents and skills, e.g., singing and the ability to relate to children make them a valuable resource in the preschools. Training is conducted at different times of the year, including the summer for the government school teachers in the adoption programme, and usually takes place at the Bodh headquarters. For regular Bodh teachers, the training is for three months, while for the government teachers participating in the school adoption programme it is for two to three months. Mother and child teachers also receive a two month course. To begin with, the training programmes were residential, but were changed to a non-residential mode, making it convenient for the many women participants. The training is conducted in a non-threatening atmosphere, which encourages participants to address issues, and interrogate their own belief systems. Some of the Bodh trained government teachers mentioned their initial scepticism about the Bodh training, and how they were 'won over' subsequently. The emphasis of this initial training programme seems to be on developing a worldview, basic awareness and a positive disposition regarding children, community and schooling, and not so much on skill-development. Bodh trainers are conscious about the need for greater emphasis on basic conceptual clarity with regard to scholastic subjects such as mathematics and science that may need to be incorporated into the training programmes.

Not all who get trained sustain their interest in and commitment to the Bodh approach and turnover of Bodh teachers is quite high and is one of the greatest worries for the organization. The single largest cause for turnover of the largely women teachers is marriage and familial pre-occupations. Others have left to take up jobs that are in other educational institutions and programmes

in the state and so the training provided by the organisation is not considered to be wasted effort. In fact the Bodh trained teachers are considered well equipped for the progressive programmes underway in the state and get easily absorbed by them. Since the latter pay better salaries, these are more attractive career options, especially for the men teachers. Such instances of teacher turnover are considered to be positive outcomes by the organization as the training will be put to good use elsewhere.

The **AKF(I) project** had the following objectives: 1) to establish and implement a larger community-based, early childhood education (ECE) programme; 2) adapt and experiment with Bodh's educational 'outreach' approach in selected government primary schools; 3) provide training to government teachers; 4) develop a 'teachers initiative' to design, develop and implement the curriculum using Bodh's training methodology, materials and manner of assessing the children's progress; and 5) undertake action research and documentation.

The **preschool programme** was started in 1993 and now operates in all 7 slums where Bodh works, catering to a total of 662 children in the age-group 3-6 years (table 4). Of its 9 posts of teachers only 7 are filled, including 2 teacher researchers, who provide additional inputs of planning and coordination, while doing the work of teaching. All 12 posts of mother teachers are filled. The teachers work for a total of 8 hours everyday (see table 5 for a breakdown of tasks), while the mother and child teachers work for 5. Mother teachers are part of the children's neighbourhood and community and thus can enter their homes and influence families in ways that the teachers cannot. They are an impressive group of women who, if need be, can and do manage the preschool without the teacher. Some child teachers, mainly adolescent girls who have been or are in the Bodh primary schools, are being associated with the programme as child teachers. Underlying this intervention is the fundamental concern for children's holistic development, which implies that health and cleanliness be considered in addition to the input of preschool activities. A team of researchers from the Institute of Development Studies, Jaipur are involved in a project on child health and hygiene in collaboration with Bodh. In the development of curriculum and material for the pre-school programme teachers gain familiarity with the children's dialect, their traditional stories, games, songs and customs and use these as pedagogic tools and activities. Traditional stories are recited and dramatized with puppets and pictures; songs are sung by teachers and children. In all of these activities the children's participation is solicited.

Materials used include pebbles, dried beans, beads, blocks, mobiles, crayons, pictures and drawings, wooden puzzles and toys. All these can be easily handled by young children. The teachers, mother teachers and child teachers, wherever present, provide structure to the typical preschool morning, which proceeds in a planned, sequential, though not rigidly fixed, manner. All activities are planned for systematically at the centre-level under the leadership of teachers and mother teachers, who maintain daily diaries for which an hour is reserved everyday. These record all that happened in the course of their work and make an assessment of what they were able or unable to achieve, giving reasons. They also record what happened in their visits to children's homes, which are conducted everyday. Some mother teachers have become literate enough to write diaries on their own. A monthly report on each child is prepared by the teachers and shared at different levels, including parents.

The preschool programme has been well established by Bodh and makes good use of human resources from the community. It has also clearly fulfilled the specific

project objective of developing and implementing a low-cost, community-based preschool education programme in the urban slums. The development of the curriculum and training has also taken place in the course of the last three years, with some interaction with other professionals and with good use made of traditional languages/dialects, games, songs and stories.

More long term planning, which is done on an annual basis in the summer vacations, also becomes more substantive with the daily, fortnightly and monthly reports in place. A locally appropriate and feasible training approach for teachers has been devised, giving due respect to the needs and constraints of trainees, e.g., an earlier residential three-month long training course was modified into a non-residential one to suit the exclusively women trainees.

The **adoption programme**, still in its pilot phase, is the means whereby the approaches developed in the primary schools are being implemented in 10 schools in Jaipur of the Rajasthan state government. It seeks to fulfil the project objectives of exploring the demand from others - NGOs and government - for training preschool and primary teachers and testing the validity of the alternative education approach developed by Bodh in selected primary schools. Planned for a period of 5 years, 1994-1998, actual implementation of the programme at the schools was started in 1995. This was preceded by a series of steps, starting with negotiations and reaching an agreement with government officials and functionaries for making the intervention possible; recruitment of additional Bodh teachers; their training over three months; and provision of a shorter two and a half month training course to 16 government primary school teachers. In line with its plan of moving incrementally from classes 1 to 5 in five years, the programme was started in class 1 in 1995 for a group of 25-30 children in each class. Further, if the number of children in each class exceed 30 - or at most 35 - a section of the children in each grade are separated for the programme, referred to as the Bodh group. In 1996, Bodh has encompassed classes 1 and 2 in the schools.

The adoption programme is being implemented within each school through a sustained and continuous process of introducing Bodh's curriculum and teaching methods to the mainstream or government teachers and assisting them to make these part of their own practice. At the same time the Bodh teachers are getting first-hand experience of the government school environments. As the government schools are ill-equipped Bodh is contributing a considerable amount towards educational material, for example, in the way of paper, crayons, books, worksheets, games and other educational aids.

The programme is a major step forward for the organisation in terms of replicating and adapting its approaches for an environment which is rather different from the slums. In nearly all of the schools a Bodh teacher is working on a full-time basis along with one or more Bodh trained government teachers. This programme is now in its second year of implementation at the level of the government schools and, given Bodh's philosophy of taking account of the holistic needs of children and their communities, has had to address a number of persons at different levels within the system: the state education department officials, the school heads, teachers, children and their parents. The attempt is to find and create allies at different levels, therefore, much work has been done for co-opting state officials, especially at the district level. The district officers of the education department represent the middle-level bureaucracy and are often believed to be resistant to change. Nonetheless, it is seen that the programme seems to have been well received by them. The programme also appears to be well received by most of the school

heads and has provided a platform for them to meet and discuss their own specific problems; exchange notes; and to share opinions on wider educational issues. Some are willing to put aside their political and other differences and sit together at the Bodh office for school heads' meetings to discuss educational matters. This in itself is fairly significant, given the milieu of the teachers' unions where administrative matters such as transfers and benefits of service have usually had precedence over educational issues. Parents gatherings are organised once in 3 months to discuss Bodh's approaches and unify their perceptions related to the child and education.

The programme has been in operation only since July 1995 and it is still too early to say what its final outcomes will be. It is an intervention into the state system and therefore is understandably constrained by its pressures. However, now that the initial steps of trust-building have been successful, it may be possible to apply some of its methods in greater measure. Organisational problems of inadequate space and teachers may also have to be viewed within the milieu of the individual schools. Local solutions may very well emerge as a result, for example, by soliciting parental support or getting older children to help with the younger ones. Similarly, the inputs of educational material may, in time, have to be sought from local sources - familial or community.

The **costs** of Bodh's programmes are being met by the MHRD and the AKF(I) with the latter's current, annual input being larger than that of the former. The Primary School programme that is being undertaken in the 7 slum schools is funded by the MHRD, while the Pre-school and Adoption programmes are being funded by the AKF(I). The total budget for the AKF(I) project, phase 1 in 1993, which was a one-year planning grant, was Rs. 1,232,000. Starting from March 1994 phase two of the project was initiated, to go on through 1997 with total approved funding of Rs. 12,657,000. This phase was co-funded by the British Overseas Development Administration and the Bernard van Leer Foundation.

The project was initially slow to start up all its activities and this is reflected in the considerably greater underspending in the years 1993 and 1994 (table 7). This was partly to do with bureaucratic delays in obtaining government approval under the Foreign Contributions Regulation Act (FCRA) for receiving funds from foreign donor agencies and approval from the Rajasthan government and state education department for making an intervention in the government schools. The underspending still remains, but is particularly high under the head of personnel, evidently linked to the problem of high staff turnover, especially that of teachers. Under Personnel there is only 54% utilisation of the available amount while under Operations it is 81% and Programme Activities is over 100%. This, however, also suggests that the project is spending quite substantially on its planned activities, despite the fewer staff members on board.

While 1995-96 is unlikely to be a representative year, for future prognosis of costs, it is easy to see that the investment on staff is lower in the adoption programme than in the pre-school or primary school programmes. As there is no expansion visualised in the personnel for the adoption programme, it should prove to be a way of making optimal use of Bodh's own teachers, with the built-in potential for training teachers in the government schools on a sustained and long term basis. This is significant also for the reason that the impact of the programme will ideally reach a larger number of children, in the light of the planned incremental growth from one group of 30-35 children in the first year to five groups of 30-35 children in five years. The corresponding increase in costs is likely under some heads, but not significantly as far as Bodh's own

personnel costs are concerned. From this comparison of costs, it is also clear that the adoption programme has needed a larger investment in the spheres of Training and Supplies than the other two programmes. It is likely that training as an aspect of Bodh's work, will increase in the future. Correspondingly, the costs of training may also go up to some extent and may in fact represent a future direction for Bodh's own role vis-à-vis the wider system, i.e., as a training resource base.

Objectives of setting up a pre-school programme have largely been met by the organization; appropriate curricular and pedagogic strategies have been deployed, with adequate space given for community involvement and innovation. Objectives relating to outreach and dissemination of the Bodh approach is being realized via the adoption programme. Initial indications are fairly positive but more concrete outcomes are yet to emerge. While it is still too early to make a judgement on the research undertaken so far, it is important that the programmatic and dissemination needs of Bodh are articulated in these.

Recommendations

Bodh initiatives in the slum schools

The slum schools present a model for mobilization of local resources. The manner in which they have evolved has been extensively documented, and they provide such valuable lessons for any future initiative of a similar nature. **These initiatives need to be continued, and whatever support required for that needs to be mobilised. Further, the entire documentation on the Bodh experience in the slums should be consolidated and presented for dissemination to a wider audience.**

Skills and human resources are being generated within some of the slum communities and Bodh sees that its future role may be limited to providing technical and training inputs in some places. But there is a continuing need to generate material resources to even maintain the initiatives, as it is not clear whether community participation and ownership will translate into funding from within. **It is therefore recommended that, wherever possible, some funding possibilities be explored for the long term sustainability of the slum-level work.**

Not all curricular activities were being conducted in accordance with the spirit of Bodh's pedagogic approaches. Instead there was a certain amount of mechanical interpretation of the approach. **Thus there is scope for introspection about some of the pedagogic strategies employed by teachers in Bodh schools.** Bodh has generated a repertoire of ideas, devices and methods on curriculum, pedagogy and student-assessment for the various levels of preschool and elementary school which could be applied to any school situation based on a child-centred and activity-centred approach. **These ideas and materials should be disseminated to a wider audience and possibly replicated.**

Adoption Programme

The adoption initiative is based on a conviction that major innovations in the system cannot be effected merely through administrative fiats, but has to go through a rather protracted and slow process of intense interaction with individual teachers with the aim of building in them the conviction to trigger off such transformations. It is the teachers, the children and the community who, in the ultimate analysis, have to sustain such change. **The project also**

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seeks to demonstrate that there is a legitimate space for micro-level interventions, involving just a few classes, teachers and schools. Not all interventions, perhaps, need to be large scale and systemic to be effective. This experience, however, needs to be documented and shared on a wider platform.

The possibility of mobilizing community support has still not been fully explored in the government schools under the adoption programme. While there are very significant variations of socio-economic background among the schools in the adoption programme, **it may nonetheless be worthwhile to assess what possibilities there are for seeking greater material contribution from the communities and families of the children. This would be particularly important for ensuring the future of this intervention and its long term impact.**

Initiatives such as Bodh's is beginning to make a dent in the system, albeit gradually. A tangible outcome which is unfolding through the school adoption programme is the organic linkage between the government schools and the community. Community involvement that Bodh initiatives are now beginning to elicit will surely prove to be a significant element in the institutional memories of these schools. **This aspect of the adoption programme needs to be strengthened by Bodh along with the other stakeholders of the programme. Furthermore, the overall Bodh strategy should direct the evolution of contextual and locally appropriate and feasible initiatives for change in the schools covered by the Adoption Programme.**

Because of the constant interaction between the schools and the government officials, there is awareness and appreciation among the latter for the Bodh efforts in schools under the adoption programme. This, coupled with the schools' potential to act as resource centres, should help in widening the spread of the innovation. Bodh's role so far has been to plant the first seeds for networking between the school heads and other relevant arms of the state's bureaucracy. **This will have to be further worked upon and strengthened if it is to emerge in the form of a lobby or advocacy group for better school education in the state.**

Bodh as an Organization

Bodh has generated a small group of skilled and motivated teachers who have a readiness to work in partnership. Many are also trained in documentation, planning and social survey and who have valuable field experience. Owing to the large turnover of staff, Bodh has over the years lost some of these human resources and should therefore consider ways of retaining them in the future programmes and making optimal use of their skills.

At a broad level, Bodh's own plans for the future are likely to be two-fold: a) strengthening and replenishing of its own model of education for children and b) playing the role of a catalyst for improved education at a wider level. **These are both important directions and Bodh should consider the possibilities of formulating new projects or programmes, develop the necessary organizational and other skills and raise resources for these in the long term.**

For the long term sustainability of Bodh some formalized organizational arrangements may need to be developed. While the staff do already have skills in some of these, such as, documentation, social survey and coordination of personnel, there is a lacuna in organisational management capacities. **This indicates the need for greater capacity building in areas of Management Information Systems, more streamlined allocation of portfolios and time and**

office management. For the moment it appears that the full-time and long-term leadership of the organization is limited to one person. There may thus be a need to address the question of developing a second line of leadership.

Training

Bodh has developed expertise related to training in curricular, pedagogic and community-related aspects of school, and has established functional linkages with a network of external experts who are often invited as trainers. Training inputs have been documented in some detail, and they could very well be used to generate training packages. **Bodh appears to have a definite future as a training organization in this field. This is an area where the organization's potentials could be further strengthened, financially as well as programmatically.**

Given the uneven development of skills and abilities among Bodh teachers, there is scope for reviewing the status of the in-house capacities for a range of curricular activities. **A detailed training-need-assessment should, therefore, be undertaken among the teachers, in order that appropriate training strategies may be worked out.**

Bodh trained teachers are considered very well equipped for the progressive programmes underway in the state and are easily absorbed by them. Such instances of teacher turnover are considered to be positive outcomes by the organization as the training will be put to good use. **It would be useful for Bodh to record and document as far as possible the reasons for teacher turnover as these may provide insights for possible training linkages with other organizations at a future date. It will also be useful to establish an alumni network of Bodh trained teachers, for continuing training inputs, and to develop a wider resource base which Bodh could call upon for specific tasks.**

Teaching the older children in classes 4 and 5 is acknowledged as a problem area in the Bodh slum schools. **Working out alternative curricular materials and pedagogic devices for the older children and giving greater emphasis on basic conceptual clarity would, however, have to receive focused attention during future training programmes.**

Research Studies

It is still quite early to make a judgement on the research studies undertaken by Bodh in collaboration with external consultants. Nonetheless it seems that the organization's programmatic and dissemination needs should be articulated in all such studies. **It is therefore, recommended that any research undertaken with external consultants should be done in close collaboration with the teachers, core group of functionaries and other relevant persons linked to the organization and take account of the sources of information and records of experience maintained by Bodh.**

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CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Beginnings

The roots of Bodh Shiksha Samiti go back to the mid-eighties when a group of academics, educators and activists, many of whom were linked to democratic mass organizations, and the civil rights and women's movements, came together. Among other things, they began discussing the plight of people living in the slums of Jaipur, the capital of Rajasthan, and possibilities of developing initiatives for improving their situation. The needs were manifold and ranged from provision of basics of infrastructure, such as water supply and housing to what was visualized as a social requisite, i.e., education. To improve amenities like water supply would have required them to play an overtly political role, which the group neither felt adequately equipped for, nor did they wish to become mere intermediaries between the slum dwellers and the civic authorities. Education for youth or children, however, was seen as a non-political sphere of work. A start was made to understand the specific needs and situation of youth and children in one particular slum, Gokulpuri, located in Shastrinagar, Jaipur and a long-drawn out process of getting acquainted with people and trust-building ensued. The latter was a particularly difficult task as the slum dwellers had already encountered some private initiatives for setting up schools in their locality, and these had proven to be attempts at land-grabbing or of other similar dubious intent. The initial process of gaining people's trust took about a year or more during which two individuals, who were among the founding members of Bodh Shiksha Samiti, took it upon themselves to get to know the residents and their life situations in one cluster of Gokulpuri.

The initial search was for an *ideal school*, which on the one hand should reflect the aspirations of the slum dwellers and respect the dignity of children and on the other hand should eschew certain existing practices, such as, corporeal punishment, which was prevalent both in the community and in other schools of the neighbourhood and wider context of the city. This *ideal school* was visualised to transact a curriculum which should respond to the whole life-space of the students, their material deprivation, emotional stress and intellectual suppression. Thus they sought to evolve a model of primary education based on democratic principles and provide children with a nurturing learning environment, based on trust rather than fear of teachers. This model also viewed parents and community members as active stakeholders, not only in the setting up of the school, but also in its day to day running and curricular issues.

There was a considerable degree of agreement on issues relating to goals and objectives of education among the founding members of the organization. These aims were further buttressed in the course of their ongoing dialogue within other contemporary fora of the civil rights and women's groups. The milieu in Rajasthan was fairly significant in influencing their vision about this time. These encompassed the larger purpose of creating conditions for women's and children's development, literacy and education. Equally, the interface of discussions and interaction with community members and children was important for the formulation of aims and purposes of the school. They viewed children as placed in the context of their homes, families and community and based their educational philosophy, aims, practices and curriculum on these.

Bodh Shiksha Samiti or Bodh, as it will be referred to in this report, shares in common some characteristics with other progressive educational interventions that are underway in India and elsewhere. All of these attempt to address pertinent issues about the importance of local contexts and cultural milieu in developing effective educational strategies and for addressing the social and psychological needs of children. While many started out as alternatives to the dominant system, today these approaches are being accepted as viable even within the framework of the formal system. The Aga Khan Foundation has in fact supported the development of alternatives in its projects in India, with a view to disseminating their lessons and replicating them on a wider scale. While each of these, has a unique story and context, these are no longer unacceptable within the mainstream of educational intervention. On the contrary, the development of viable alternatives is being emphasized in many quarters, including the state educational system. The intervention of Bodh is on a small scale compared to the state- and nation-wide programmes that are currently being attempted in India, but also represents a degree of success in meeting the objectives of reaching children and addressing their needs in a thorough and appropriate manner.

External Funding and Programme Development

Till 1987-88 none of the founding members drew salaries even though they worked full time on this initiative. Instead they contributed their own resources of time and money. Along with some of the slum dwellers from Gokulpuri, they thereafter sought to expand the area of work and take this model school, as it was realized to be, to other slums in Jaipur. This led to the birth of the organization, registered as a legal entity in 1988, i.e., Bodh Shiksha Samiti. Financial support was sought in 1988-89 from the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, under its Scheme for Innovative Experiments in School Education. A grant from this scheme, meant for non-governmental agencies, enabled Bodh to start new school centres in four other slums in the city and hire teachers. These were Ramdev Nagar, Malviya Nagar, Guru Tegh Bahadur Nagar and Nagtalai. Another two slums, Amagarh and Jai Chittor Nagar were included in the programme in 1993-94, bringing the total number of locations to seven.

The new areas were similar in terms of the poverty levels of the inhabitants, all of whom were first or second generation migrants from different parts of the state and country. Their children were either unable to enter the nearby government schools or even if they entered they dropped out soon after. The reasons for this were familial and institutional. The children's unstable familial situation did not encourage them to enter the nearby schools and the rigid structure and formalized milieu of the government schools proved to be alienating rather than supportive. As they came from very poor families many children had to work, either at home or for wages. This in turn conflicted with the possibility of their receiving an education, given the fixed hours required in formal schools. These children, in the 6 to 12 years age group were slowly drawn into the slum schools which continued to function with funding from the government, as mentioned above.

In time, young siblings of the slum school children tagged along with their older brothers and sisters, and the need for catering to the preschool age group (3 to 6 years) was felt. This led to the inception of Bodh's preschool centres in 1993, first with a pilot grant, followed by full-fledged project funding, from the Aga Khan Foundation (India). These were set up within the primary schools in each slum habitation, many of which were stretched for space. The

slum residents were active not only in the provision of space for the preschools, but were involved in discussing the need for it, and subsequently, as we shall see, in the delivery of education as well.

While the Bodh initiatives for primary and preschool education expanded, the possibility of making an impact on the wider state system of government primary schools in Jaipur and Rajasthan emerged in 1994. An exchange of ideas and experiences between officials in the State Education Department and Bodh led to an experiment in 1993 for using the approach in two state schools. This has further led to the development of a five-year plan, finally implemented in 1995, after some delays in getting off the ground, to extend the innovative approaches developed by Bodh to 10 government primary schools in Jaipur on a pilot basis. These schools also largely cater to children of slum and/or inner city residents, not very different from children who attend the slum schools, in terms of socio-economic background. Termed as the Adoption Programme, this is also being supported by AKF(I). Schools were chosen for the purpose, teachers recruited, and training was given to the new Bodh and government teachers working in the chosen schools. The programme was visualized as moving incrementally from Class 1 to 5 in the five-year period planned for. Among other things, this requires the placement of Bodh teachers in each of the 10 state schools, alongside of the newly-trained government teachers. It further seeks to involve parents through home visits and parents' meetings. In the process of growth - of this, as also of the other initiatives mentioned earlier - due respect has been accorded to Bodh's fundamental principles of community and parental participation and support.

Communities Served

Bodh's work in its slum schools is an intervention for the benefit of children of the socio-economically disadvantaged residents of Jaipur. The first entry made into Gokulpuri, in a sense, laid the ground for Bodh's subsequent work. This was and still is a legally unrecognized habitation, populated largely by families of low caste migrant workers, landless peasants and traditional artisans. Most of the inhabitants have come into the city from different parts of rural Rajasthan or a few other states. The Bodh core group spoke with the residents in the slum on the need to do something about their children, who were collectively viewed as innocent victims of the existing system, but for whom there would be no return in years to come. The possibility of setting up a school emerged only after a considerable amount of consensus about the need for a school was generated among the residents in the cluster. The core group played a persuasive and facilitative role at this juncture, and garnered the support of children more easily. Subsequently women and men in the area were convinced of the sincerity of their intentions as well as the need to involve themselves in it. A few key residents, along with the children, made it possible to set up the school. They took it upon themselves first, to contain voices of criticism from within the community and subsequently arouse collective interest, opinion and effort in favour of setting up a school. Once this had become manifest, it became possible in 1987 to find space and construct a basic shed for the school and hire two teachers, whose salaries were paid by raising money from personal sources. All these activities were carried out with the full support of the residents, many of whom contributed by providing labour, material and money for constructing the school building.

Bodh's work in the slums of Jaipur has been growing steadily: from the one school in Gokulpuri, it now has seven centres, catering to 662 preschool and over 1000 primary school children in the age groups three to 15 years. All these

localities have largely migrant populations. In a study done in 1994 of six slums, where Bodh worked at the time, 92% of the sample (20% of the total) households were of migrants from rural areas of Rajasthan. Of the total population in the slums, 75.67% were Hindu; 14.47% were Muslims and 9.83% were Sikhs. The Muslim and Sikh populations were located exclusively in two localities, Amagarh and Guru Tegh Bahadur Nagar respectively. Of the Hindu population 86.22% were of scheduled caste or tribe.

Household income in the localities varies somewhat, but falls within the range of Rs. 1,000 to Rs. 3,000 per month. The occupations represented in the sample households were unskilled workers (68.33%); semi-skilled/ skilled workers (31.66%); casual daily wage earners (48.33%); government or semi-government employees (21.68%); contractual workers (18.99%); self-employed persons in petty business (5.90%); and employees of private organizations (3.90%). A large share of household income is spent on the basic necessities of food and clothing, followed by medical care, electricity and water.

Educational levels in these communities were fairly low: of a sample of 3,364 persons in the 7 years and above category, 67.80% were illiterate; 20.42% had been through primary school; 9.3% had been to middle school; 1.90% had been to secondary school; and 0.53% had been to college. Of the female population, 80.72% were illiterate.

Problems of unemployment, alcoholism, gambling, ill-health, inter- and intra-community conflict are reportedly quite usual. This inevitably has an impact on familial relations in all the 7 slum localities. It is quite usual for women to bear the major burden of providing for the family, especially since men often spend their earnings on drinking and gambling. Thus, many of the women have to work for wages in addition to running their households and caring for children. The Bodh programmes therefore, provide an important space for the women in the communities via their women's groups, whereby they not only contribute towards their children's education but also acquire literacy and a range of other skills themselves.

The government schools where the adoption programme is being implemented are similar to each other, with roughly the same sort of facilities, although they are located in different parts of the city (table 1). Some, e.g, Paharganj, Bajajnagar, Jhotwara, Kothi Koliyan and Gher Saiwad are in the old city area; others are in slum areas (Nahari ka Naka and Jawahar Nagar); a village near Jaipur (Sheopur); a newer part of the city (NVD); and one is within the campus of an engineering college (MREC), but caters to children from the neighbouring slums.

The adoption programme is reaching out to children of communities that are comparatively varied, but nonetheless belong to fairly disadvantaged groups. Based on the data given in table 2, compiled by Bodh teachers and functionaries, it is evident that these are not very homogeneous groups. The parents' educational levels, for instance, vary considerably, for example, the range is from 6% and 7% literacy rates of fathers of children in the Kothi Koliyan and MREC schools respectively to 62% being school educated in the case of the NVD school and 12% having received higher education in the Gher Saiwad school. Similarly the mothers' educational levels also range between 37% having received school education in the NVD school to a 57% illiteracy rate in the MREC school. There are considerable differences in the kinds of occupations represented in these groups, also evident from table 2.

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Table 1
Adoption Programme: School Profiles

No.	School	No. of children	School Level	School Age	Type of People	Situation of School	No. of Teachers	Facilities available	Average Age of Class I	No. students in last 5 years	Ed. Policy	Religion of Family
1	Gher Saiwad	280	Upper Primary	20 yrs (1977)	ordinary	old part of town	14	electricity, water available, TV, library, musical instruments	6.5	constant in the beginning, increase this year		mostly Hindu & other
2	Jhotwara	280	Primary	11 yrs (1986)	ordinary	inner city	8	no proper place	6	constant decrease	ordinary	mostly Hindu & backward classes
3	Jawahar Nagar	35	Primary	1 yr	for slum students	in the slums	2	no facilities apart from 'dari'	7		ordinary	mostly HIndu & backward classes
4	Kothi Koliyan	475	Upper Primary	23 yrs (1973)	ordinary	old part of town	14	electricity, water, some rooms have fans, some rooms do not have roofs	7.75	constant increase	ordinary	backward Hindu class
5	M.R.E.C.	200	Upper Primary	17 yrs (1980)	ordinary	institut-ional area	13	nine rooms, electricy & water	6.25	almost constant	ordinary	mostly Hindu & other

No.	School	No. of children	School Level	School Age	Type of People	Situation of School	No. of Teachers	Facilities available	Average Age of Class I	No. students in last 5 years	Ed. Policy	Religion of Family
6	Nahari Ka Nak	500	Upper Primary	48 yrs (1948)	ordinary	near slums	18	building is of U-shape, not enough space according to no. of taps, enough water	6.6	decrease	ordinary	mostly Hindu
7	N.V.D.	250	Pre-Primary & Primary	52 yrs (1945)	special pre-primary school	new prat of the city	24	enough space other facilities available	5.6		Montessori method	Hindu, Muslim & other upper classes
8	Pahargunj	260	Primary	12 yrs		old part of town	14	bad situation of building	6.7	almost constant	ordianry	mostly Muslim
9	Sheopur	215	Upper Primary	28 years (1969)	ordinary	near part of village	24	water, toilets available, no electricity in 'shala', dari patti are not enough	6.5	constant decrease	ordinary	mostly Hindu & backward classes
10	Bajaj Nagar	220	primary		ordinary	new part of city	6	4 rooms, electricity, water, musical instruments, playgrounds	6		ordinary	mostly Hindu SC/ST

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Table 2

Adoption Programme: Background of Childrens' Families

Education of Father					Education of Mother				Occupation of Father					Occupation of mother			
School %	Lit-erate %	Illi-terate %	School Ed. %	Higher Ed. %	Lit-erate %	Illi-terate %	School Ed. %	Higher Ed. %	Low Level Service %	High Level Service %	Daily Wages %	Small Occ. or Bus.%	Unem-ployed %	House -wife %	Low Level Service %	Daily Wages %	Small or large Bus.%
GS	-	38	50	12	44	44	12	-	44	-	12	44	-	94	6		
J	-	67	33	-	69	25	6	-	53	-	33	-	14	44	-	44	12
JN	50	50	-	-	69	25	6	-	6	-	75	19	-	37	6	44	13
KK	6	88	6	-	50	50	-	-	12	-	19	69	-	25	-	31	44
MREC	7	64	29	-	21	57	22	-	29	-	29	29	13	75	-	25	-
NKN	19	50	31	-	73	20	7	-	31	-	69	-	-	91	-	6	13
NVD	-	38	62	-	38	25	37	-	69	-	-	31	-	81	-	-	19
P	20	40	40	-	44	50	6	-	7	-	-	80	13	25	-	-	75
S	50	50	-	-	75	25	-	-	25	-	44	31	-	69	-	25	6
BN																	

Bodh Philosophy and Organizational Structure

We tried to understand the philosophy on which Bodh as an organization is based, the principles according to which it is structured and the manner of its functioning over the last several years. We also sought to understand the curricular and pedagogic vision that the Bodh schools represented. We studied the various documents that Bodh had brought out, and had long discussions with some of the people who had been associated with Bodh at various levels, i.e., members of the core group, functionaries, teachers, and members of the community. We observed a few classes; meetings of *Mahila* and *Kishori Samoohs* (women's and girls' groups); a fortnightly workshop of the teachers; a meeting of the adoption school heads with Bodh and the District Education officer; a presentation of a research study being done for Bodh; and a meeting of parents and teachers at one of the government schools where Bodh is making an intervention. We also studied curricular materials, evaluation records, teachers' diaries and the periodic reports submitted to AKF(I).

Bodh's concern is primarily as social as it is educational. The organization seems to tacitly endorse a vision of social change which is community-centred, community-participative and community-determined, based on the principles of equality, human dignity and democratic functioning. Bodh schools are intended to provide fora for the communities to discover themselves as collectives for eventually being able to work towards this end. The Bodh teachers and other functionaries primarily attempt to assist each community in this process by providing fora in the form of schools, and the necessary technical or professional help by means of which to participate in their activities.

The schools, more specifically, attempt to develop in the children a worldview based on the three cardinal principles crucial to Bodh's vision, viz., equality, human dignity and a democratic way of life. The unique character of each locality within which Bodh works is very important and determines to some extent the type of intervention that is made, and allows for expression of local language, lore and practices.

The curricular and pedagogic approaches of Bodh essentially emerge out of the broad vision of social intervention, mentioned above. Schools are set up to function in a democratic framework, and the spirit of democracy characterizes the interactions among teachers, between teachers and functionaries, between teachers and children, teachers and para-teachers (mother and child teachers), teachers and community, and among children. It has been Bodh's endeavour, we were told, to reflect as much as possible, and critically if necessary, the knowledge and values of the community in the curriculum and the manner in which it is transacted. This has been done to ensure authenticity and contextuality of the curriculum. In schools, children are related to with dignity, and on the basis of equality. There is very little regimentation in the functioning of Bodh Schools; no form of punishment is given to children, corporeal or otherwise.

The Bodh philosophy was not apparently an entirely premeditated one, it was merely an idea in its germinal form at the time the organization was established and its first school started at Gokulpuri. Over the years - through experience in the various slum schools and communities, self-reflection by the core group of functionaries, and interaction with other scholars and activists in education and development - the Bodh vision seems to have got crystallized. Its ramifications have been articulated, and some of its idealistic angularities somewhat smoothed out by considerations of practicability and feasibility.

A pertinent question here is: to what extent is the Bodh Vision shared at the various levels of the organization and its operation? The core group members and the important functionaries seem to be fairly clear and convinced about the philosophy underlying the organization. Most of them have been associated with the organization for several years, and have participated in the process through which this philosophy has emerged. This was also the case with the teachers who have been associated with the Bodh activities since several years. However, some of the more recent entrants among teachers are still in the process of internalizing the full import of the philosophy. As for the government teachers associated with the organization in the schools under the adoption programme, Bodh vision represented primarily (and in some cases, a mechanistic notion of) a child-friendly approach to human relations in the classroom/school, and an activity centred approach in pedagogy.

Understandably, there is a great deal of variation in the manner in which individual functionaries relate to the Bodh Way even within a given level of operation or within a specific category of functionaries. For instance, within the school adoption programme we talked to a few government teachers who are teaching in the Bodh Way. We could see that some of them were more aware and enthusiastic about, and perhaps held greater conviction in, the approach than others. Age, experience, position and gender did not seem to be a factor influencing this. It should, in fact, be seen as an achievement for the organization to have provided legitimate and adequate space for people with varying degrees of awareness, enthusiasm and conviction about the philosophy to work together in a cohesive and coordinated manner. They have thus been enabled to position themselves within Bodh's operations and contribute meaningfully towards realizing its goals.

The organization at the field level consists of the 7 preschool and 20 primary teachers who are based in the slum schools. Of the preschool teachers, 2 have the status of teacher researcher as they put in additional work towards coordination of the team of teachers at two particular slum schools where the children number more than hundred. Women and some older children - mainly adolescent girls who have been or still are in the Bodh primary schools - are trained and employed as para-teachers referred to as mother and child teachers. There are 12 mother teachers at present, while child teachers are a slightly amorphous lot as their association has so far been solicited as part of training, rather than employment. There is a move underway to pay salaries to some child teachers as well. In addition to the teachers, the mother and child teachers are also functionaries of the programme at the school level and put in about 5 hours of daily work (see table 5).

The organization at the moment does not have an adequate number of teachers as staff turnover has been a major problem in recent years. The schools are short by two preschool teachers and five primary teachers. Reasons given for this high turnover of staff are mainly to do with the inability to pay salaries that compensate the teachers adequately. While most male teachers have reportedly left for better salaries and security of government (or other) service, women teachers tend to leave for familial reasons. For the latter, it was said, that married women find it hard to cope with the number of hours that Bodh requires them to put in, so even if they are not so easily lured by better wages, they are pressurized by their families to quit once they get married or have children. Thus 'most Bodh teachers are unmarried young women', we were told.

Resource persons are drawn upon for certain activities like teaching of music, dance or health education for the women's and girls' groups (*mahila* and *kishori*

samoohs) or even for training of staff members. These may be individuals called upon to provide a specific input or may be full-time personnel who fulfill training needs on a regular basis. Two such resource persons are a full-time music teacher who has recently joined the organization and a health professional, associated with the Institute of Development Studies, Jaipur who has periodic sessions with the women's and girls' groups. Bodh also hires the services of psychologists, specialists in school subjects and others as part-time resource persons for training programmes as well as follow-up workshops.

Furthermore, one Bodh teacher per school has at present been placed in seven of the 10 government schools under the adoption programme. Ideally they should have one in each school, but are short staffed, as some newly recruited teachers have left the programme. In addition Bodh has trained government teachers for the adoption programme, some of whom are placed in the government schools where the programme is being implemented. The latter group of teachers are technically not part of the Bodh organizational structure but represent the attempt to replicate their approaches at a wider level. They are, therefore, closely associated with the organization for the present and are among the Bodh stakeholders, even if not on its payroll.

At the level of Bodh's office, the "core group of functionaries", as they are called, constitute the nerve centre of the organization. This consists of the Coordinator; at the top and a next level of one Assistant Coordinator; three Programme Assistants; a full-time resource person (a music teacher); and two teacher researchers. The last two have taken on some coordination roles, while teaching at a preschool and a government school under the adoption programme. The assistant coordinator oversees the work of the primary schools in the slums as well as providing administrative and other support to the Bodh team as a whole. Her support role includes the following: planning of activities; coordination of workshops and visits; fulfilling of teachers' needs on academic subjects; supervision over matters relating to curriculum, accounts, distribution of funds and administration. The three programme assistants are each in-charge of one of the following three areas of work: the preschool programme, training, and the adoption programme. In each of these they are involved in the administration, information sharing and supervision at the field level, at the Bodh headquarters level and between the two. It thereby becomes possible to identify needs, for example, in training, networking, for workshops, or of women and children at the community or school levels.

The coordinator is a full-time functionary who is also a member of Bodh's Executive Committee and the 4 member Core Group and one of the two remaining founding members who started Bodh in the mid-eighties. He is the over-arching manager of the organization, in all its projects, programmes and administration. This involves providing leadership on a day to day basis; in seeking short and long term directions for the organization; and in envisioning its future. The leadership of Bodh is an understated, rather than an overtly hierarchical one. One receives the impression of a participatory and flat organization with only a hint at being a hierarchy and that too for functional purposes. At the same time, most of the other staff members look to the coordinator, almost deferentially, for direction and suggestion, rather than instructions, about how they should proceed in their activities. This is also true to some extent of the wider group of Bodh's stakeholders, i.e., community members in the slums and the government school teachers.

The organization is supported by a four-member Core Group, who have been instrumental in the formulation of the long term aims and objectives of the

organization. In addition the thirteen-member Executive Committee of Bodh is constituted of the four core group members, plus another nine persons who have had an association with the organization. Of these persons, the only full-time functionary of Bodh is the Coordinator. For the moment it appears that the full-time leadership of the organization is limited to one person. **There may thus be a need for the core group to address the question of developing a second line of leadership.** The core group and executive committee include the following types of individuals: well-known academics and activists from Rajasthan, a resident from Gokulpuri who was instrumental in the initial setting up of Bodh and a former government official. Each of these persons presents a different facet of Bodh, providing it with the overall image of an organization that seeks allies in every quarter. It thus becomes possible for Bodh to enter the somewhat diverse spheres of slum society, and the middle and upper echelons of government. A special committee referred to as the steering committee has been set up for the adoption programme and has representatives from the Education Department of the state, the AKF(I), Bodh, and another prominent NGO in Rajasthan.

The core group and executive committee are not active in the day to day functioning of the organization but meet periodically for making certain decisions, for example, about the core group of functionaries or to assist whenever problems need to be sorted out with officialdom. They, as individuals, also represent an abiding group that is likely to be around, possibly for longer than, say, the members of the core group of functionaries. The latter except for the coordinator, are all women in their twenties and thirties, some of whom are likely to be under pressure from their families to marry or take on greater familial responsibilities. **It is therefore important for Bodh, as an organization, to consider ways of making it possible for its staff - at the field and office levels - to work optimally.** This may imply providing shorter working hours, possibilities of part-time work, reconsidering the desired length of service that is sought, and possibly improved pay.

Despite the constraints under which the staff and organization are functioning, the core group of functionaries strikes one as a highly committed and motivated group of people, who are well versed in the Bodh Way and its rationale. The organization is transparent and there was no evidence of trying to cover up any aspect of its functioning. On the contrary, many of our questions were answered in the spirit of trying to find solutions to well-acknowledged problems, as and when they were discussed. We also received the impression that the staff members - in the slum schools, government schools and office levels - were stretching themselves to fulfill the requirements of the programmes and their activities. This may partly be related to the absence of adequate staff members, but also reflects a sense of ownership for the organization and its objectives.

At a broad level, Bodh's own plans for the future are likely to be in two directions: a) strengthening and replenishing of its own model of education for children and b) playing the role of a catalyst for improved education at a wider level. The first represents the inward-looking direction of the organization, as it is not complacent about its achievements but wants to improve upon its practice at the levels of the classrooms or groups of children in the school and in the context of their families and communities. The second refers to its role in network building, training and advocacy, which Bodh would like to do in partnership with the government schools, education officials and other relevant bodies and persons. **These are both important directions and Bodh should consider the possibilities of formulating new projects or programmes, develop**

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the necessary organizational and other skills and raise resources for these in the long term.

The Present Programmes

Bodh is currently undertaking three main inter-related programmes: the **Primary School Programme**, which now caters to children in seven slums in Jaipur; the **Preschool Programme** located along with the seven primary schools in the slums; and the **Adoption Programme** which is being undertaken in 10 state government primary schools in Jaipur. The first of these is still funded by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India (MHRD) under the scheme for Innovative Experiments in School Education and represents the result of the first educational intervention made via the school in Gokulpuri, even before Bodh came into existence. The preschools are an outcome of the need to provide education for children in the three-six years age group and AKF(I) support. While the operation of both these programmes is well established and has been extended from five to seven locales, the Adoption programme still represents an initial attempt to take the Bodh approaches to a wider platform namely, the government schools in Rajasthan.

The primary and preschool education programmes are delivered via the slum schools, which are of varied pattern, depending on the locality and the availability of space in each. In Gokulpuri, for example, the primary school and preschool is entirely housed in a single building consisting of four rooms and a courtyard. Of these, only three rooms are large enough to accommodate groups of 25 or 30 children at a time. The courtyard is also used for holding classes, while the remaining smaller room is used for meetings. The younger children, that is, the preschoolers and classes 1, 2 and 3 attend a morning shift and the class 4 and 5 children come in for an afternoon session. This enables optimal use of the available space and, as older children quite often are busy in the mornings with housework, sibling care or earning a wage, they are able to attend school in the afternoons. In contrast the centres in Malviya Nagar and Guru Tegh Bahadur Nagar are run out of two and three different places respectively. In the former, space has been carved out within two community areas and sheds have been built for the purpose at some distance from each other. In the latter slum, different households have provided two rooms, a hall and a courtyard, once again all at a distance from one another. In both these centres the children attend classes in turn, with the younger ones doing so in the mornings and the older groups coming in towards noon as they work in the mornings.

Chapter 2

APPROACHES

Community and Parental Involvement

Decision-making regarding the setting up of a centre for primary or preschool children has always been preceded by a process of trust-building and negotiation within the neighbourhood and community of the slum. Prior to entering the habitation area, Bodh solicits the collaboration of its residents. The first attempt for Bodh, therefore, is always to generate a sense of ownership for the programme/s on the part of the community. This is well manifested in the provision of space for the centres, which is sought from people themselves. There are some schools where the sheds or rooms provided by people are used exclusively by the school, while in others the rooms or courtyards are part of a household's living space. If none of these are available Bodh teachers find space under trees, in a courtyard or on the streets. In fact these options have been considered significant in gaining people's trust in the organization, as they are able to see for themselves what goes on in a Bodh class and school, and, as one person put it, 'it literally breaks down the barriers between school and community'.

The slum-level programmes for primary and preschool education are further supported by community involvement on a daily basis. *Mahila Samoohs* or Women's Groups have been created from among the mothers and other women residents. These groups meet every afternoon along with a Bodh facilitator to discuss their own or their children's needs, for community singing, to play games, to receive inputs for health and literacy and any other desired training, e.g., sewing or embroidery, which they can mutually agree upon and arrange for. Bodh arranges for appropriate resource persons for health, music, sewing or others activities. Some women, through sustained interaction in the groups, provision of literacy skills and training, have been drawn into the programme as para-teachers or Mother Teachers, as they are known, for the preschool programme. The groups have thus been very important in generating a human resource for the preschool programme within each of the 7 localities where Bodh preschool centres operate.

Bodh has over time been associating the older children of the community for assisting with the younger ones, and they are referred to as child teachers. This, however, has been a somewhat informal arrangement compared to the mother teachers who are paid a monthly salary and constitute a regular part of Bodh's staff. Many children, especially boys, have entered the nearby government schools or have started working. Several girls (14-20 years) who have completed five years of primary education through the Bodh schools have, however, not been allowed by their parents or communities to continue their studies. They are either needed at home, or according to social mores, cannot be allowed to go out of the locality without a chaperone. These girls are being supported by Bodh in the following ways: a) educational assistance by Bodh teachers, which will lead up to their taking school-leaving examinations; b) training and employment as child teachers in the preschools; and c) participation in groups of adolescent girls or *Kishori Samoohs*. The last of these is for the present being tried out in two localities served by Bodh, namely Malviya Nagar and Guru Tegh Bahadur Nagar. Appropriate resource persons are called upon to provide inputs of health education, music, dance and training in sewing or other skills to the

girls' groups. One or a combination of the three options is open to the girls in these two localities, while the first two are available in all 7 schools. The girls' group is a potentially invaluable human resource that Bodh is hoping to draw upon for training into teachers in the future. This is particularly so in Guru Tegh Bahadur Nagar where most women marry within the locality and thus many of the girls are not likely to leave in years to come. In the other areas it may not be possible to consider such a possibility as most young women would marry and leave at some point of time.

The principle of community and parental involvement has been extended to the adoption programme in some measure even though the children in the government schools do not always live in close proximity to the school or each other. In fact in almost all of the adoption programme schools, they do not live in a defined community at all. Contact, through regular home visits, is set up with the parents of the children by the Bodh teachers who currently work at the government school. Parent-teacher meetings, held every three months for parents of children in the programme, are also a regular feature in these schools and are being used as a forum at the school level for voicing concerns about the learning capacities of children, their behaviour and general educational needs and issues. This is still an initial stage and much further work needs to be done on creating the kind of community contact needed. The Bodh approach is quite incomplete if they do not have a complete sense about the child's universe and the teachers are thus considered unable to respond meaningfully to his/her emotional, intellectual and other needs.

Over a period of time the families become well known to the teachers and it is slowly becoming possible for the teachers to proffer advice to parents regarding their children. For example, at a parent-teacher meeting that we attended at the Paharganj school, parents spoke and questioned the teachers on a broad range of issues. Located in an inner city and predominantly Muslim populated area, this is an Urdu medium school. Parents thus sought to allay their fears on whether the Bodh intervention was going to take away the school's special status. Once assured by the District Education Officer, also present, that this was not so, they went on to express concern about their children. Matters discussed included why the children did not seem to be doing homework, a father's anxiety about the irresponsible behaviour of his child, the need to introduce English teaching and a range of other issues. Some specific children were discussed with the teachers and headmaster and the latter went on to advise parents on the importance of not beating, scolding or pressurizing children, and instead treating them with respect and care.

The Bodh teacher subsequently went on to question one of the fathers on why he had scolded and beaten his son a few days earlier. He responded to this by mentioning a misdemeanour on the part of the child, and after some discussion, agreed that maybe he should not have done so. This instance illustrated that the teacher on the one hand, had established enough rapport with the father to question him on his dealings with his son and on the other hand that the child trusted the teacher adequately to report about his father. A few other parents at the meeting also spoke up to seek advice on what they can do along with the children to support their education. They wanted to know how they should help them in their studies and asked for books or worksheets that they may be able to assist them with at home.

A few mothers, wearing *burqas* and reportedly attending for the first time in a mixed group of men and women, expressed anxieties about their children's, notably daughters', studies or said that they were happy with the progress of

their children. Still other parents had questions about how this approach was going to assess their children's progress or what, in general, the prospects were for their children's future, given the low status of government schools and the disadvantaged educational status of Muslims. Many parents also requested the introduction of English in the school's curriculum as this would provide a means of mobility and better jobs for their children. Responses to all these issues came from the teachers, headmaster and the district education officer and some amount of discussion followed. The meeting was conducted in an open and cordial manner and illustrated the parents' concern for their children' studies and future. Issues of apparent disagreement, possibly even tension, were tackled rather smoothly. We are, however, wary of drawing more in terms of meaning and implications than what we should from this brief exposure, for we realise that the adoption programme is still in its infancy and the scenario is still evolving.

The meeting also gave the teachers an opportunity to ask parents for their contributions, for example, in the way of notebooks or other materials. While parents were responsive to this request, a father also demanded that the material be put to good use and not frittered away by children on paper planes. While this may be a positive sign of seeking accountability from the school, it also may imply that parents of government school children are not as unwilling or unable to pay for their children's educational needs, as is currently presumed. While there are very significant variations of socio-economic background among the schools in the adoption programme, it may nonetheless be worthwhile to assess what possibilities there are for seeking greater material contribution from the communities and families of the children. This would be particularly important for ensuring the future of this intervention and its long term impact.

Bodh's curriculum appears to us as an attempt to build on and stir the whole being of the child, and this cannot be accomplished without a comprehensive knowledge of and sensitivity to his/her total context. A major emphasis in Bodh's curriculum is on learning totally integrated with socialisation in the family. For Bodh, it is paramount that the education that their schools impart does not create social distance between the child and her family. The family, therefore, has to be constantly carried along as an equal partner in the educational endeavour. Community contact, therefore, becomes an integral component of Bodh's curricular and pedagogic approach, and is not merely an add-on.

Every Bodh teacher (in the slum schools as well as in the schools under the adoption programme) visits the household of one child in her group on an average every day. She shares her impressions of the child's progress, and gets to understand the parents' perceptions which she records in the cumulative assessment record book of the child. This, truly, seems to work to build a real partnership between home and school in the child's progress. We did not get to accompany the teachers in their home visits. But, from whatever interactions we witnessed between the parents and teachers we gathered that theirs is a real and evolving partnership. It is admittedly tough to attempt to do this in a milieu quite indifferent to any kind of reaching out. For instance, it has still not been possible to convince the government teachers participating in the adoption programme of Bodh to do the regular home visits and have time assigned for this, although some of them, reportedly, have time and again done so on a voluntary basis.

Curriculum and Practice

The basic educational principles first evolved and operationalised in the Bodh primary schools sought to make education interesting, activity-oriented and thus rejected rote learning. Instead of using textbooks they introduced worksheets and story books. Worksheets were developed through daily planning workshops and in the earlier years, teachers were not only given intensive training in the newly evolved educational concepts and methods, but also involved in their formulation. The children's own lives - processes of play and learning at home - and their cultural milieu were used as sources to develop curriculum. Thus stories that they heard and told in home and community settings, traditional children's games and the dialect they spoke in, were drawn upon both for the new curriculum and as media of teaching and learning. Children were streamed into different groups, based on their development and learning levels, rather than age or ability grades. Assessment of learning levels was done on a continuous basis without imposing the pressure of testing on children. Initially, while the children were very appreciative of the new teaching methods, the adults in the community did not have much empathy for the organization's ideas on education. The use of such pedagogic strategies, therefore, needed very intensive dialogue at the community level as they were fairly alien in the context of people's pre-conceived notions about what constitutes 'schooling'. In fact the latter was in some senses considered to be synonymous with discipline, deference and rote learning and it took considerable discussion and time to convince people about the value of the new methods. These educational principles have become part and parcel of the present programmes but, as we shall see, have been developed further as the work proceeded.

This, however, brings us to the pertinent and related question: how does the Bodh philosophy translate into their curricular practice? Bodh's approach to curriculum and pedagogy seems to stem out of a set of convictions or underlying assumptions, that a) a child is qualitatively different from an adult in the manner in which he/she is cognizant of and relates to the world, b) what the child learns at school is only a part of the broader socialization and learning he/she imbibes from home, neighbourhood and the larger society, c) a child learns best through meaningful activities, d) learning takes place best when it goes through a process similar to the one knowledge has evolved through, and e) there is considerable individual difference between children in style and pace of learning even within broad age and ability clusters.

We observed a sample of Bodh classes in the slum schools as well as in the schools under the adoption programme. We also discussed with the teacher concerned (wherever it was possible) about the rationale behind specific curricular/pedagogic elements included in the class. On the basis of these, the following are some of the impressions we received about the curricular and pedagogic approaches of Bodh:

Bodh follows a flexible age/grade matrix. There are no rigidly defined classes, there are only loosely constituted *samoohs* (groups) based on age and what might be a rough overall assessment of capability. The composition of the *samoohs* takes care of a smooth transition from one age-ability level to the next. The attempt is to constitute groups of manageable size, about 20-30 in number, which are homogeneous (by and large) in terms of psychological and other developmental parameters, and to engage them in curricular tasks which are accessible to them. The system also allows for yearly re-grouping on the basis of assessment of capabilities. The *samooh* or group system seems to work pretty well in the slum schools, where there is organizational space to accommodate

such structural flexibility. However, in the adoption programme schools the system seems to lose much of its flexibility. Here, the *samooh*, more or less, becomes merely a class with a somewhat favourable teacher-pupil ratio of 1:30. It has been difficult to negotiate this ratio with some of the schools on whom there are enormous enrollment demands. In all the three adopted schools we visited, we found some classes having been divided into two *samoohs*, but yet sharing a single classroom. When one of the teachers is on leave, the other has to manage both the groups.

The Bodh curriculum attempts to use what the child is capable of and familiar with as a starting point. It includes culturally familiar experiences of songs, stories and games. Some of the 'hard' components of the curriculum, such as mathematics, are also taught through pedagogic devices like games which are based on the ones the children are used to, and using objects which children normally use in play. Bodh had undertaken a detailed documentation of the activities of children in the slums even before they started their first school. The curricular approaches were devised on the basis of this documentation. During the initial years, teachers, almost routinely, did a great deal of innovating and improvising on locally available and relevant resources, for instance, on objects, events and people, to design curricular strategies and pedagogic devices. Over the years, as some senior functionaries of Bodh observed, there has been, as one would expect, some degree of standardization in the curricular strategies and pedagogic devices. Consequently, there is a likelihood that some of the newer Bodh teachers might have a lesser sense of ownership for (and, perhaps, lesser control over) the Bodh curriculum and pedagogy than the veterans.

We received the impression that the pedagogy adopted in the preschool and early-primary classes was largely play-centred and activity-oriented. The teacher initiated an activity which normally lasted for half an hour or so. For instance, in one of the classes we observed (which was a preparatory group, almost equivalent to the traditional class 1) a sequence started with the recitation of a poem on a doll, followed by free-hand sketching and colouring, followed by filling in colours with crayons in a line drawing of a doll, made earlier by the teacher. All these activities took some 45 minutes. Then, with not much of an interval the children were switched over to another activity. In the next sequence half the group was given the task of addition with *rajma* (beans), and the other half that of painting a line drawing of a cup and a *nal* (faucet) and writing the appropriate word against the picture. These sequences were largely teacher initiated and teacher controlled. The children mostly did individual activity, even when they sat in small groups. They individually showed their work to the teacher for approval, she inspected it and encouraged each one of them. **In the light of such instances, there may be scope for introspection about the 'child-centredness' of some of the pedagogic strategies in Bodh schools.**

Certain idiosyncrasies of individual children were allowed without overt discouragement. For instance, in the class mentioned above, a child insisted on using the beans for writing the word instead of doing the stipulated addition problem. The teacher approved of this and encouraged the 'deviation'! The activity sheets made by the teacher were the main teaching aid used, not to mention crayons, paper and dried beans. Teaching was done in an integrated manner, especially for children in the first two age groups, considered as roughly equivalent to classes 1 and 2 in the formal system. Learning of mathematics, for instance, was not separated from that of language or drawing. Children were encouraged to learn independently from their own activities, play

situations and stories. In subsequent classes, however as we shall see, subjects were demarcated to some extent.

Storybooks with a lot of pictures, some Indian publications and some Russian and Chinese publications translated into Hindi, were seen to be used in all classes. Bodh used no state-prescribed textbooks for classes 1, 2 and 3. In class 4, textbooks were used as resource material. However, in class 5, teaching-learning was based almost entirely on state-prescribed textbooks. Use of textbooks in classes 4 and 5 relates to Bodh's concern for preparing children at the end of class 5 for the common examination, and thus arriving at some kind of parity with the mainstream on the latter's terms. The special preparation that Bodh children were given for the common examination at the end of class 5, was not so much in terms of knowledge and skills, but to acquaint them with the regime of textbooks and written examinations. Children from the Bodh schools, reportedly, have been able to make the transition to the mainstream schools quite easily.

There seems to be a certain shift from a process-oriented approach in the early primary classes to a content/product oriented approach in classes 4 and 5, again perhaps because of the concern about having to eventually mainstream the children after class 5. In the two classes, 4 and 5, that we observed, the approach was definitely a textbook-centred one. In class 5, they were doing a lesson on Health. The children did silent reading of their textbooks which was then followed by a discussion with the teacher, wherein, according to the teacher, 'she tried to clarify some of the doubts the children had about what was given in the textbook'. The class 4 lesson that we observed was one on Air Pressure. The teacher more or less followed the sequence given in the textbook, and used the same illustrations. She also demonstrated a classic "experiment" given in the textbook. One was not very sure whether the children were completely following what was being taught.

The general atmosphere of the Bodh classrooms was definitely of a relaxed nature. Children seemed to be enjoying what they were doing, especially in the lower classes. The Bodh teachers never used a chair, they always squatted alongwith the children on the *dhurry* (rug) spread on the floor, or moved among the group. Children called a woman teacher, 'Didi' (older sister); but, a male teacher was invariably 'Sir'! In the Bodh classes that we observed, teachers were by and large friendly and reassuring, at the same time being firm and clear in their instructions without having to raise their voice. (However, one government teacher, recently inducted into Bodh, whose class we observed was seen on one or two occasions apparently struggling to keep her cool when some children found it difficult to follow her instruction.) Children in the Bodh classes were definitely more confident and fearless in the manner in which they related to each other and the adults. In the adoption schools, the difference in classroom climate between the Bodh classrooms and the non-Bodh ones was telling. In one of the schools we visited, the children of a non-Bodh class were more interested in what was happening in the neighbouring Bodh class than in their own; they were peeping into the Bodh class all the time. Presumably, they found the Bodh class much greater fun than theirs. Bodh pedagogy was at times a lot of din too, and this was not always taken very kindly by the non-Bodh teachers in the adoption schools. Obviously, there was a certain difference in perception between Bodh and non-Bodh teachers as to what should be considered 'good' classroom behaviour! This problem was less visible in schools where the approach has been more widely accepted by the school head and teachers.

The material input for a typical Bodh classroom includes a few multi-purpose pieces of furniture: a storage cupboard, a blackboard and an improvised puppet theatre stage. In addition, there were shelves for storing stationery and teaching aids. A section of the wall was converted into a blackboard, at a height suitable for little children to reach. Most classroom sessions involved use of papers, pencils, crayons and play materials, all supplied by Bodh. In the schools under the adoption programme, there was striking contrast between a Bodh classoom and a non-Bodh one in terms of the availability of teaching-learning materials.

How is student assessment/evaluation done in the Bodh Way? Concern for the individual child is not merely an abstract principle in Bodh, it translates well into the student assessment practices as well. The methods are very exacting in their expectations from the teachers, who are expected to do a detailed documentation of each child's activities with a qualitative assessment of his/her performance. All activities that the child does in the classroom are filed. Some teachers, especially some of the senior ones, keep daily diaries which also refer to individual children. Once a month, all these scattered reflections on a particular child's performance, on cognitive as well as physical and social aspects, are compiled into a report. These are usually shared with the parents during the regular home visits that the Bodh teachers make. A consolidated report, detailed and qualitative, on each child's performance is prepared annually. All these are recorded in a notebook, one for each child. This is passed on to the teacher in charge of the group the child is going to be a member of in the subsequent year. The new teacher makes a meticulous effort at studying the cumulative record of her new wards before she starts her sessions. Student assessment is an activity taken very seriously by Bodh teachers, although some of the senior ones feel that the earlier rigour has got somewhat diluted. All the same, as it stands now, teachers spend a considerable amount of time in student assessment and related documentation.

When Bodh tried to sell this idea of student assessment to the government school teachers with whom they were starting to collaborate under the adoption programme, there was reportedly some resistance. Keeping detailed assessment records means time, of the kind which government school teachers were not prepared to put in. In response, Bodh standardized the assessment format with a check-list of statements regarding the student's performance. All that is needed in this is ticking of the appropriate statements. In addition, Bodh has also introduced a year-end examination with grading for the schools under the adoption programme. This reassures the parents of these children that they are being treated in a manner that is not radically different from the others, but at the same time, is done without the imposition of examination pressure. Bodh's plan is to eventually prepare the children in the adopted schools for appearing in the common examination at the end of class 5, similar to the manner in which they do it in their slum schools.

Planning and Documentation

For Bodh, teaching is a praxis, involving both action and reflection. This explains Bodh's insistence on teachers making extensive documentation of their day-to-day experiences. All Bodh teachers meet for an annual workshop to plan to reflect on the previous year's experience and planning for the current year. That is where they decide on the broad strategies, curricular sequencing, etc. This workshop is held over a month for the regular Bodh teachers, and for 10 days for the teachers of the government schools under the adoption programme. Apart from this, the teachers meet regularly for a fortnightly workshop, where

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they share their experiences in greater detail, using their diaries, and planning for the broad teaching-learning activities for the next fortnight. The teachers of a particular school also meet in their school in the week-end between these fortnightly workshops. Broadly within the framework collectively worked out at the fortnightly workshops, the individual teacher makes her detailed plan for the next day's activities every afternoon after the day's work is over. All these activities of planning, writing diaries and documenting, though done individually, are always exercises involving a lot of sharing and reflection.

We went through some of the diaries and plans the teachers kept regularly. We found them fairly copious, extensive, and somewhat self-critical. There were, of course, individual differences in the extent of conviction and involvement that the teachers showed. Some of the government teachers were really trying hard to meet these exacting requirements, while others felt these diaries and meetings were sometimes too demanding.

In addition, the organisation keeps very detailed minutes of their meetings, workshops and training sessions. Occasionally they use video recordings to document certain occasions. While some of these are used for programme development and routine reporting especially to AKF(I), a lot of very rich information still remains a potential source for research and dissemination. Bodh is a fairly self-aware organisation, and sets store by documentation and self-appraisal, with a view to identifying future directions for their programmes. **Some of these sources should be tapped in their research and documentation efforts.**

Training

The effectiveness of Bodh's operations is highly dependent on the competence, motivation and 'the right kind of attitude' on the part of their teachers. Initially, Bodh comprised a group of intrinsically motivated volunteers whose commitment and conviction could well have been taken for granted. However, when Bodh started their slum schools in several locations with funding from the Government of India, they had to arrange for the participation of a large number of people with varied backgrounds and persuasions as teachers and other functionaries. This necessitated an intense induction or training programme which aims not merely at developing in the participants a repertoire of knowledge and skills, but also in sowing in them the seeds of healthy scepticism about what has long been taken for granted about education, school and children. In addition, the training programmes provide them with an opportunity for debate and dialogue on the various issues related to children, community, schooling, curriculum, pedagogy an so on. These programmes are designed generally as consciousness building exercises about the self, as well as the child and his/her context, aiming to develop empathy and understanding about the community. Bodh's training inputs have been shaped out of the accumulated insights through praxis, and this ensures their authenticity and relevance.

The slum schools, both preschool and elementary sections, have been attracting people with varying backgrounds for different reasons. Some respond to the Bodh advertisement seeking just another job, while others have heard of Bodh and want to participate in their activities. Most of them have been young women graduates. They are selected for training after a fairly thorough screening. The school adoption programme, on the other hand, made it necessary for Bodh to bring into their fold a different kind of people, viz., teachers working in the government school system, with a different work ethos, and apparently a

different set of aspirations. Most of these people have been nominated by the government department of education for the Bodh training, apparently with their consent, but knew very little about the organization at the time of their nomination.

In contrast, those who undergo training as mother teachers have had a fairly intimate prior acquaintance with Bodh and their activities through the *mahila samoohs* or through casual interaction with the slum schools as parents. Similarly, most of those who get trained as child teachers have been students in the slum schools, and some of them have participated in the *kishori samooh* activities. Most women who get trained as mother teachers are illiterate, and many of them have since been picking up literacy and numeracy skills via the *mahila samoohs*. But, they have other talents and skills such as singing or playing the *dholak* (a percussion instrument), not to mention their ability to relate to children, which make them a valuable resource in the preschools. For these groups of trainees, especially, Bodh training programmes serve as a major consciousness building exercise mainly focusing on the web of relationships that forms the context of the child in which the self has a crucial and positive role to play.

Training is conducted at different times of the year, including the summer for the government school teachers in the adoption programme, and usually takes place at the Bodh headquarters. For regular Bodh teachers, the training is for three months, while for the government teachers participating in the school adoption programme it is for two to three months. For mother teachers and child teachers also the training is for three months. To begin with, the training programmes were residential and held on a camp mode. However, when Bodh widened their catchment, they were changed to a non-residential mode, keeping in view the convenience of many participants, especially women.

We did not get to observe a training programme in action. But, from what we gathered from the Bodh teachers and the government teachers who are alumni of these programmes, the Bodh approach to training seems to be remarkably non-coercive. These courses are conducted in a non-threatening atmosphere, but at the same time encouraging the participants to address various issues, and interrogate their own belief systems. Some of the Bodh trained government teachers we talked to told us about the scepticism with which they had initially approached the Bodh training, and how they were 'won over' within about ten days of the programme. For the training of Mother Teachers and Child Teachers, the emphasis is also to develop in them certain specific skills related to assisting the preschool activities.

The training seems to help the various categories of people in quite different ways. For many of the young graduates who get acquainted with Bodh through the training, it unfolds a whole lot of new and un-thought of possibilities with regard to their own future growth and work. For the mother teachers, the training programme validates a lot of their own native skills and talents, and develops some new ones, thereby boosting immensely their own self esteem. One government teacher who had recently gone through Bodh-training talked to us enthusiastically about how the training helped him to come out of his earlier shy self and develop a great deal of confidence.

The emphasis of this initial training programme seems to be on developing a worldview, basic awareness and a positive disposition regarding children, community and schooling, and not so much on skill-development. The orientation of the training programmes is not didactic; the participants are encouraged to

bring forth their own experiences and skills into the programme. In any case, the initial training is not seen as a one-shot approach, but is meant to be followed up with ongoing interactions with fellow teachers at the school-level, Bodh functionaries and other teachers in workshop situations. Training and subsequent interactions between the teachers and the Bodh functionaries are not intended as 'hand-holding' exercises; the emphasis is on collectively arriving at solutions to problems related to practice.

Bodh trainers are conscious about the need for greater emphasis on basic conceptual clarity with regard to scholastic subjects such as mathematics and science that may need to be incorporated into the training programmes. They feel they may face less difficulty in this respect from the government teachers who come for Bodh training, under the adoption programme as they have fairly strong academic skills in their respective disciplines. This limitation is particularly significant for the teaching of older children in classes 4 and 5 and is acknowledged as a problem area. Working out alternative curricular materials and pedagogic devices for these classes, and giving greater emphasis on basic conceptual clarity, would however, have to receive focused attention during future training programmes.

In the core resource base comprising the regular Bodh teachers and the Bodh-trained government teachers, there is a rather uneven distribution of skills and abilities. There are some who may need further orientation or convincing in the Bodh pedagogy while there are others who may require intensive training in science or mathematics. Bodh has attempted the organising of study circles with some success. **A detailed training-need-assessment, however, should be undertaken among the teachers, in order that periodic workshops or study circles can be organised with specific training agenda. Some of the more experienced Bodh teachers who may have dropped out, as well as other experts, could be called in as resource persons for these.**

Not all who get trained sustain their interest in and commitment to the Bodh Way. Turnover of Bodh teachers is quite high (table 3), and this is perhaps one of the greatest worries of the Bodh core group. There is this case of a Mother Teacher having had to quit in spite of her sustained interest in and identification with Bodh, because the remuneration she received as Mother Teacher hardly compensated her opportunity cost. She has since taken up a regular job as a sweeper in the municipality, but she continues to be an active member of her *Mahila Samooh*. We were told also about the case of a government teacher (under the adoption programme) who 'seemed quite receptive' during training, but who later got herself transferred out, unable to withstand un-supportive peer attitudes towards her Bodh-related activities. The largest single cause of dropping-out among Bodh teachers in the slum schools, especially the young women, however, seems to be marriage and subsequent familial preoccupation. There are not many men among regular Bodh teachers, and there have been cases of some having dropped out for reasons related to career. **Bodh might like to explore possibilities of involving people on a part-time or flexitime basis, or hire them under contractual arrangements for specific tasks, so as to avoid losing some of their trained and experienced functionaries altogether.**

Many teachers trained by Bodh have left to take up jobs that are in other educational institutions and programmes in the state and so the training provided by the organisation is not considered to be wasted effort. There are some examples of persons who have availed of the training and have started their own schools, others have joined the state schools or programmes such as Lok

Jhumbish, a Rajasthan government effort for strengthening and re-vitalizing the primary school network in rural areas. A few government teachers and school heads, who are part of the adoption programme, also have associations with private schools and are known to be using the innovative methods in these. In fact the Bodh trained teachers are considered very well equipped for the progressive programmes underway in the state and are easily absorbed by them. Since the latter also pay better salaries, these are more attractive options especially for the men teachers. Such instances of teacher turnover are considered to be positive outcomes by the organization as the training will be put to good use. In the light of these impressions, it would be useful for Bodh to record and document as far as possible the reasons for teacher turnover as these may provide insights for possible training linkages with other organizations at a future date. It will also be a useful exercise to establish an alumni network of Bodh trained teachers, to facilitate follow-up and continuing training inputs, and also to develop a wider resource base which Bodh could call upon for specific tasks.

Table 3

Yearwise Teachers Trained

Year of Training

No. of years served	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
Less than 1	3	1		6	6	4	17	3	1
1-2	7	1		6	6	3	14	6	1
2-3	2	2		6	1	2			
3-4	3	2		1					
4-5	1								
5-6		1							
Still serving	1	5		1	2	6	5	8	10
Total trained	17	12	0	20	12	15	36	17	11

Total trained: 140

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THE AGA KHAN FOUNDATION (INDIA) PROJECTS

The objectives of the AKF(I) pilot grant to Bodh, given in 1993, was to:

1) develop and implement a low-cost, community-based preschool education programme in urban slums;
2) develop and document a new preschool curriculum and training approach for teachers;
3) develop appropriate teaching and learning materials;
4) explore the demand from NGOs and government for training programmes for preschool and primary teachers;
5) test the validity of the alternative education approach adopted by Bodh in selected primary schools.

Following the pilot phase, AKF(I) approved a three-year phase 2 grant for the project, with the following objectives:

1) to establish and implement a larger community-based, early childhood education (ECE) programme;
2) adapt and experiment with Bodh's educational "outreach" approach in selected government primary schools;
3) provide training to government teachers;
4) develop the 'teachers initiative' to design, develop and implement the curriculum using Bodh's training methodology, materials and manner of assessing the children's progress; and
5) undertake action research and documentation.

The Pre-school Programme

The Preschool Programme was started in March 1993, first in 5 slums and now operates in all seven slums where Bodh works, catering to a total of 662 children in the age-group three-six years (table 4). There are nine posts of teachers in this programme, of which only seven are filled, including two teacher researchers, who provide additional inputs of planning and coordination at the centre and organizational levels, while doing the work of teaching. All 12 posts of mother teachers are filled now and a large number (about 100) of women have also received training and constitute a potential human resource within each locality. The teachers work for a total of 8 hours everyday (see table 5 for a breakdown of tasks), while the mother and child teachers work for 5. The strength of the mother teachers is that, even though they have only recently become literate, they are part of the children's neighbourhood and community and thus can enter their homes and influence families in ways that the teachers cannot. They are a very impressive and motivated group of women who, if need be, can and do manage the preschool without the teacher. Some child teachers, mainly adolescent girls who have been or are in the Bodh primary schools, are being associated with the programme in different centres, either as volunteers or may soon be paid a salary as well. In some areas it may, in time, be possible to train some of these girls into preschool teachers and Bodh is seriously considering this as a future strategy, given the present short supply and high turnover rate of teachers. In the future it may be possible in some localities to thus visualize a situation where Bodh's direct role and participation for the preschool programme is considerably reduced, as far as supplying teachers is concerned.

The preschool now provides the children an environment which is somewhat different from their homes but an attempt is made to connect the programme to their familial settings. They are able to do this via the *mahila samooh* in each locality or women's groups which meet everyday, among other things, to discuss their children's education, cleanliness, health and nutrition. This has also created a channel of entry into the school for the children's family members, especially their mothers and older sisters. Concern is thus aroused within families about the young child's needs. From these women's groups a cadre of para teachers or mother teachers, as they are called, have been successfully trained and employed in the pre-schools. Most mother teachers have largely gained even basic literacy skills in the course of their experience in Bodh and subsequently have been trained for 2 months to assist the teachers. Similarly some children, especially adolescent girls, through association and training, have also been involved in the preschool programme as child teachers. Like mother teachers, they work as assistants to the preschool teachers and now a salary is being considered for them.

Underlying this intervention is the fundamental concern for children's holistic development. This implies that children's health and cleanliness be considered in addition to the input of preschool activities. While no specialized input has been made for delivery of health services as such, the women's groups, mother/child teachers and home visits by teachers have been used to make some points at the familial level about hygiene and the need for children to be clean and healthy. Now, however, a team of researchers from the Institute of Development Studies, Jaipur are involved in a project on child health and hygiene in collaboration with Bodh. Following an extensive survey of the slums where Bodh has its centres, a plan for health education and support for women and adolescent girls has been evolved and initiated. The preschool programme has thus developed considerably in terms of the number of children who attend and the training and skills imparted to teachers, women and children from the community.

When the programme first started, Bodh's in-house skills to deal with this age group of children were limited. These have been built up over the last three years through training, which initially was residential and an intense process of sharing personal life experiences and community beliefs and stories. Many of these were reproduced or re-enacted through role plays, drama, narratives, songs, dancing, games and drawing which have been important in eliciting discussion, breaking down inhibitions and creating a sense of being part of a collective team. These processes in training have been viewed by Bodh as means of establishing participatory communication, team and confidence building and also releasing peoples' creative and analytical capacities. Furthermore, skills in craft work were imparted with the assistance of resource persons, for example, basket-weaving was taught to the group by a resource person, a master basket weaver from Andhra Pradesh. Exposure to other organizations and their human resources was also provided, for example, preschool professionals from Lady Irwin College, Delhi; Allaripu, Delhi; and Chetna, Ahmedabad. The present training of staff undertaken by Bodh still continues to follow similar methods, but reportedly, is no longer as intense a process as it used to be earlier. This is mainly due to the inability of women to participate in the two or three month long residential courses.

In implementing the programme, teachers initially felt that they were bringing in small children, who could barely speak, forcibly to school and they were at a loss about what they should get them to do. These problems were partly overcome in time by first starting their work within the normal environments of

the young children - streets, backyards and *aangans* or courtyards within the neighbourhoods - which is where they usually spent much of their time during the day. Small groups of children were collected in a few courtyards or streets, with the assistance of older children and women, and supervised by the preschool teachers. Bodh thereby took the preschool curriculum to the children. These groups proceeded alongside of the centres and gradually the children were drawn into their more demarcated and formalized space. This strategy is still used in some contexts, partly because space in the schools is often limited, but more significantly, it is a way of demonstrating the work of Bodh to onlookers from the neighbourhood and reducing the gap between the school and the home. The positive value of demonstration for changing people's own child rearing practices, as viewed by Bodh functionaries, is also emphasized in their Status Report III for the period October 1993 - March 1994 as follows:

> :..the aangan acts as a demonstration-centre. The child is usually beaten, abused, neglected - the parents have no time for patience, tolerance and understanding. To see so much importance and respect for the child in the aangan, serves as an example of an alternative caring approach to children. (page 5).

In the development of curriculum and material for the preschool programme the teachers gain familiarity with the children's dialect, their traditional stories, games, songs and customs and they use these as part of their pedagogic tools and activities. For example, traditional stories are recited and dramatized with puppets and pictures; traditional songs are sung by teachers and children. In all of these the children's active participation is solicited, for example, they chorus the teachers in songs; teachers ask questions while telling stories or during puppet shows to which children respond; children take turns in reciting stories or singing songs; and games are played with much zest, noise and the teachers' participation.

Materials used in the preschool include pebbles, dried beans, beads, blocks, mobiles, crayons, pictures and drawings, wooden puzzles and toys. All these can be easily handled by young children. The teachers, mother teachers and child teachers, wherever present, provide structure to the typical preschool morning, which proceeds in a planned, sequential, though not rigidly fixed, manner. The day for the teacher starts with cleaning the room, sundry conversation and organizing the children as they filter into the centre. This may be followed by singing of a song relating to a drawing that may be on the wall or which the teacher has drawn on the blackboard. Subsequently the children may draw pictures or fill in colours in an outline prepared earlier by the teacher.
All these activities are planned for systematically at the centre-level under the leadership of teachers. Teachers and mother teachers maintain daily diaries for which an hour is reserved everyday. These record all that happened in the course of their work in the centre and some make an assessment of what they were able or unable to achieve, giving reasons. They also record what happened in their visits to children's homes, which are conducted everyday. While some mother teachers have become literate enough to write diaries on their own, others seek each others' or the teachers' assistance to do so. On the basis of these and/or other interaction, a monthly report on each child is prepared by the teachers and shared at different levels. This is in the way of a progress report and enables them, through documentation, to monitor changes in each child and share these with parents as well. In addition each teacher also prepares a report on her work for every two-week period, which is shared by them at the

Bodh teachers' workshop held every fortnight. This enables them to discuss their problems, exchange experiences and/or solutions and plan on that basis for the following two weeks.

The organization places great emphasis on documentation in the way of writing diaries, reports on children and fortnightly reports. These are well used to generate insights for planning at an immediate level, e.g., fortnightly reports are used for structuring the activities of children in the ensuing period of two weeks and also for teachers' collectively sharing problems and/or finding solutions. More long term planning, which is done on an annual basis in the summer vacations, also becomes more substantive with the daily, fortnightly and monthly reports in place. In addition the organization has been seeking research and documentation support from external consultants for the entire gamut of its educational work. 'Psychological Studies' on slum children have, however, been planned for and would specifically focus on the preschool children. While it is too early to make a judgement on this particular study, and especially how it would benefit the programme, it is important that the programmatic needs of Bodh should be well articulated in the study.

A locally appropriate and feasible training approach for teachers has been devised, giving due respect to the needs and constraints of trainees, e.g., an earlier residential three-month long training course was modified into a non-residential one to suit the exclusively women trainees. However, Bodh teachers tend to leave the programme within a few years and this creates a major problem of repeatedly training new candidates. In some instances, even mother teachers are compelled to leave for more lucrative employment, greater security of service or shorter working hours. **In the light of the high turnover of staff, especially teachers, it is important to examine their service conditions, remuneration and working hours, with a view to improve matters.** In this area, it may be possible to explore some alternatives, for example, of providing trained teachers with part-time employment, while they are unable to work on a full-time basis. Given that all the Bodh preschool teachers are women, such flexitime schedules of work may be preferable to losing their skills and training altogether.

Table 4

Pre-School Programmes

	No. of children	No. of groups	No. of teachers	No. of mother teachers	No. of child teachers	No. of Mahila Samoohs	No. of Kishori Samoohs
Malviya Nagar	155	6	3	3	3	2	1
Gokulpuri	52	2	1	2		1	
Guru Tegh Bahadur							
Nagar	96	4	2	2	5	1	1
Amargarh	185	7	1	4		1	1
Nagtalai	54	2	1	1			
Ramdev Nagar	90	3	1	1		1	
Jai Chittor Nagar	30	1	1			1	
Total	662	25	10	13	8	7	3

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Table 5

Hours of Work of School-level Staff

	Pre-school Teachers*	Mother Teachers*	Child Teachers	Teacher Adoption*	Government Teachers
Teaching hours	3 1/2	3 1/2	3 1/2	4	4
Planning	1 1/2	1/2	1	1	1
Women's groups	1 1/2	1/2	1	1	1
Home visits	1	1/2	0	1 1/2	0
Cleaning	15 mins.	0	0	0	0
Lunch	3/4	0	0	1/2	1/2
Total	8+	6 1/2	4 1/2	7	5 1/2

* Diary writing is done in addition to the above tasks

TABLE 6

Adoption Programme: Present Status in 1996

School No.	School	Class 1	Class 2
1	Gher Saiwad	65	62
2	Jhotwara	60	33
3	Jawahar Nagar	20	20
4	Kothi Koliyan	0	59
5	M.R.E.C.	65	58
6	Nahari Ka Naka	0	58
7	N.V.D.	22	15
8	Pahargunj	33	51
9	Sheopur	54	45
10	Bajaj Nagar	65	0
Total		384	401

Adoption Programme

The other part of Bodh's work that is funded by the Aga Khan Foundation (India) is the Adoption Programme whereby the approaches developed in the primary schools are being implemented in 10 schools in Jaipur of the Rajasthan state government. This programme seeks to fulfill the project objectives of exploring the demand from others - NGOs and government - for training preschool and primary teachers and testing the validity of the alternative education approach developed by Bodh in selected primary schools. Planned for a period of 5 years, 1994-1998, actual implementation of the programme at the schools was started in 1995. This was preceded by a series of steps, starting with negotiations and reaching an agreement with government officials and functionaries for making the intervention possible; recruitment of additional Bodh teachers; their training over three months; and provision of a shorter two and a half month training course to 16 government primary school teachers. The latter were chosen in collaboration with the State Education department. Schools were also chosen through a process of screening, discussion and dialogue with education department officials and school heads.

The training of newly recruited Bodh teachers for the adoption programme was carried out along with the government teachers who had expressed willingness to participate in this programme. As the former were available for a longer period, it was possible to expose them to the Bodh slum schools and its ongoing programme. It was not possible to provide this exposure to the government teachers as they were not free before the summer vacations. The training of government teachers for the Bodh intervention had to overcome initial difficulties of gaining their trust and allaying misgivings about the value of the intervention. This was more problematic in some respects than training fresh candidates, as the government teachers were very well-entrenched both in their careers and work culture. Thus they were reportedly somewhat resistant to change. Some, including a few new Bodh recruits, were unable to cope with the rigorous training and left. Of the remaining teachers, 10 government and 10 Bodh teachers were asked to commit themselves for five years, till the programme completes its present course. Now, however, only eight Bodh teachers remain with the programme. The training has been undertaken on participatory lines, eliciting frank expression of opinions from all participants. The Bodh teachers, programme coordinators and assistants have been persuasive and supportive, while professionals in child psychology made inputs for changing the trainees' attitudes in some important ways, e.g., on notions about the roles of family members and the need to provide a nurturing environment for children's learning. Role plays, song, dance, story-telling and drama were also used for team and confidence-building and generating enthusiasm.

The need to seek parents' support in this venture has been articulated through the teachers' training. The Bodh teachers are also devoting 1 hour everyday to making home visits. This is considered vital from Bodh's perspective especially since the children do not always live in very close knit neighborhoods, from which people can be called upon on a daily basis as is done in the slums. For the moment, the home visits are conducted entirely by the Bodh teachers as the government teachers have not committed themselves to doing these so far. The parent-teacher meetings are, however, yet another means of setting up communication channels between teachers and parents to discuss specific

problems, general educational issues and generates positive attitudes for problem-solving. It is seen that to some extent the intervention has been successful in getting some parents to give up their initial misgivings about the innovative techniques of Bodh and instead demand that the programme be implemented on a wider scale.

In line with its plan of moving incrementally from classes 1 to 5 in five years, the programme was started in class 1 in 1995 for a group of 25-30 children in each class. Further, if the number of children in each class exceeds 30 - or at most 35 - a section of the children in each grade are separated for the programme, referred to as the Bodh group. In 1996, Bodh has tried to encompass classes 1 and 2 but with some variation, as some schools are constrained by inadequate teachers. Some of the poorly staffed schools are expecting to acquire more teachers in the near future. The situation is quite fluid at the moment and will be clear only after a while.

The adoption programme is being implemented within each school through a sustained and continuous process of introducing Bodh's curriculum and teaching methods to the mainstream or government teachers and assisting them to make these part of their own practice. At the same time the Bodh teachers are getting first-hand experience of the government school environments, finding out for themselves what their conditions of work are like and trying to adapt themselves and their methods to the new contexts. As the government schools are ill-equipped in terms of educational material, Bodh is contributing a considerable amount towards these, for example, in the way of paper, crayons, books, worksheets, games and other educational aids.

Still in its pilot phase, the programme is a major step forward for the organisation in terms of replicating and adapting its approaches for an environment which is rather different from the slums. In nearly all of the schools a Bodh teacher is working on a full-time basis along with one or more Bodh trained government teachers. The former is visualised as a catalyst with three different roles at the government school level, i.e., as a) a resource person; b) providing demonstration of the approach on an everyday basis and c) receiving the experience of working in a state school. As this is partly an exploratory exercise, the goal is to find ways of making an impact on the school, and ultimately, on the wider state school system within Jaipur and Rajasthan.

This programme is now in its second year of implementation at the level of the government schools and, given Bodh's philosophy of taking account of the holistic needs of children and their communities, has had to address a number of persons at different levels within the system: the state education department officials, the school heads, teachers, children and their parents. The attempt is to find and create allies at different levels, therefore, much work has been done for co-opting state officials, especially at the district level. This is significant, as the first suggestions and requests for this programme's implementation in the government schools came from the upper echelons of the state's bureaucracy, including the Secretary Education, Rajasthan.

The district officers of the education department, however, represent the middle-level bureaucracy and are often believed to be resistant to change. Nonetheless, it is seen that the programme seems to have been well received at this level: the present district education officer in charge of elementary

education in Jaipur district is a nodal person in Bodh's dealings with the district authorities. He and his predecessors have been supportive of the programme to the extent that they involve themselves regularly in the monthly and three monthly meetings that Bodh has for school heads and with parents and teachers respectively. The former are held at the Bodh office, while the latter are held in individual schools. A concrete outcome of the adoption programme is emphasised in the Bodh Narrative Report of September 1995 to March 1996: this is the considerable reduction of the dropout rate in the 9 schools in which it has been applied in the one year of its operation. This information has also been cited in the district education officer's work plan for 1996-97 as an illustration of the favourable impact of the programme. Clearly this information is being acknowledged and presumably incorporated at the district planning levels.

Furthermore, the programme also appears to be well received by most of the school heads. Of the initial 10 schools that were chosen for the intervention, one was dropped as its headmaster was not receptive to the kinds of changes that were being introduced. This incidentally was a school that had earlier received the President's award for exemplary performance and was run on `disciplined' lines that evidently could not coexist with the principles of free and active learning introduced by Bodh. Instead, another school has been added recently to bring the total number back to 10.

The programme has provided a platform for the school heads to meet and discuss their own specific problems; exchange notes; and to share opinions on wider educational issues. It is interesting to note that some of the heads belong to rival teachers union groups, but are willing and able to sit together at the Bodh office for school heads' meetings to discuss educational matters. This in itself is fairly significant, given the milieu of the teachers' unions where administrative matters such as transfers and benefits of service have usually had precedence over educational issues. For the moment, school heads who have become part of this platform appear to have moved in this direction. In time such interest may be aroused in the unions and administration as well. Bodh's role so far has been to plant the first seeds for networking and collaboration on real educational issues, between the school heads and other relevant arms of the state's bureaucracy. **This will have to be further worked upon and strengthened if it is to emerge in the form of a lobby or advocacy group for better school education in the state.** This is an important direction for Bodh's intervention and goes beyond the boundaries of individual schools, but nonetheless would contribute in a major way towards improving the quality of education.

Schools do regularly organize - once in three months - parents' gatherings where the problems concerning individual children as well as those related to general issues of Bodh's curricular and pedagogic approaches get discussed. This is also a forum for the school and the community to attempt to unify their perceptions related to the child and education. In one such meeting we observed in a school under the adoption programme, both men and women in the community participated quite actively. This was in a Muslim neighbourhood, and we were told that women assembled along with men for the first time that day. The themes discussed in this meeting included corporeal punishment, scolding, and homework. Understandably, the popular perception of what was good pedagogy and what was good for the child was quite varied in that group. We got the

impression that the meeting was as informative for the Bodh teachers and functionaries (and for us) as it was for the parents who participated.

Much greater effort is needed to overcome the systemic difficulties of creating an environment that is supportive of changed teaching styles and curriculum. Bodh may consider possibilities of persuading all teachers of a given school to undergo the Bodh training or provide appropriate school-level courses. Local initiatives by school heads have been taken in some places, for example, the Paharganj school head and teachers have all voluntarily undertaken training at Bodh. Organisational problems of inadequate space and teachers may have to be viewed within the milieu of the individual schools. Local solutions may very well emerge as a result, for example, by soliciting parental support or getting older children to help with the younger ones. Similarly, the inputs of educational material may, in time, have to be sought from local sources - familial or community. Bodh should, therefore, try to explore possibilities at the level of each school to identify solutions.

Costs

The costs of Bodh's programmes are being met entirely by the Department of Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), New Delhi and the Aga Khan Foundation India, with the latter's current, annual input being larger than that of the former. The Primary School programme that is being undertaken in the seven slum schools is funded by the MHRD, while the Pre-school and Adoption programmes are being funded by the AKF(I). The total budget for the AKF(I) project, phase 1 in 1993, which was a one-year planning grant, was Rs. 1,232,000. Starting from March 1994 phase 2 of the project was initiated, to go on through 1997 with total approved funding of Rs. 12,657,000.

The project was initially slow to start up all its activities and this is reflected in the considerably greater underspending in the years 1993 and 1994 (table 7). This was partly to do with bureaucratic delays in obtaining government approval under the Foreign Contributions Regulation Act (FCRA) for receiving funds from foreign donor agencies and approval from the Rajasthan government and state education department for making an intervention in the government schools. On the basis of forecasts in the proposed budgets and actual expenditure reported to AKF(I), it is interesting to see that in 1995, the underspend still remains, but is particularly high under the head of personnel. This is evidently linked to the problem of high staff turnover, especially that of teachers. In fact, according to the financial reports of 1995, under all line items, except Personnel and Operations, the expenditure has been almost on par with the budgetary forecasts. Under Personnel there is only 54% utilisation of the available amount while under Operations it is 81% and Programme Activities is over 100%. This, however, also suggests that the project is spending quite substantially on its planned activities, despite the fewer staff members on board.

In order to make a comparison of the costs of the three programmes of Bodh, we have taken the expenditure as incurred during the financial year April 1995 to March 1996. This is the financial year followed by government of India and therefore Bodh's financial report for the primary school programme was available for this period. We calculated the figures for the AKF(I) project for the

Table 7

Year-wise Budget and Project Costs

	1993			1994			1995		
	Budget	Actuals	%	Budget	Actuals	%	Budget	Actuals	%
Personnel	382,000	202,866	53	976,000	427,000	43	1,679,000	913,000	54
Consultant	75,000	42,573	56	287,000	153,000	53	478,000	468,000	97
Training	70,000	38,009	54	96,000	28,000	29	143,000	126,000	88
Supplies	120,000	76,308	63	239,000	166,000	69	384,000	332,000	86
Operations	245,000	129,151	52	525,000	355,000	67	721,000	590,000	81
Equipment	260,000	177,606	58	669,000	468,000	69	590,000	632,000	107
Programme Activities	80,000	33,899	42	441,000	127,000	28	450,000	491,000	109
Construction	0	0	0	0	0	0	400,000	566,000	141
Total	1,232,000	700,412	57	3,233,000	1,724,000	54	4,845,000	4,118,000	85

corresponding period, making a dis-aggregation of costs for its two programmes, partly on the basis of actuals in the case of direct costs of items, as they were stated, or on the basis of an estimate for indirect costs (see table 8). Direct costs in the adoption and pre-school programmes relate to programme staff and teachers, training, supplies and consultants. Thus it was possible to identify these exactly as being charged for one or the other programme. The salaries of the project co-ordinator, support staff, expenditure on operations, equipment and programme activities, however, cut across both programmes and were understood to constitute indirect costs relating to the entire AKF(I) project. It was, therefore, estimated that the indirect costs constitute 40% for the adoption programme and conversely 60% for the pre-school programme, given that there were fewer teachers, children and groups of children in the former programme for this 12 month period in 1995-96.

While 1995-96 is unlikely to be a representative year, on the basis of which prognosis on future costs of the adoption programme can be made, it is easy to see that the investment on staff is lower in this programme than in the pre-school or primary school programmes. As there is no expansion visualised in the personnel for the adoption programme, it should prove to be a way of making optimal use of Bodh's own teachers, with the built-in potential for training teachers in the government schools on a sustained and long term basis. This is significant also for the reason that the impact of the programme will ideally reach a larger number of children, in the light of the planned incremental growth from one group of 30-35 children in the first year to five groups of 30-35 children in five years. The corresponding increase in costs is likely under some heads, but not significantly as far as Bodh's own personnel costs are concerned.

From this comparison of costs, it is also clear that the adoption programme has needed a larger investment in the spheres of Training and Supplies than the other two programmes. It is likely that training as an aspect of Bodh's work, will increase in the future. Correspondingly, the costs of training may also go up to some extent. This may in fact represent a future direction for Bodh's own role vis-à-vis the wider system, for example, as a resource institution in training. Supplies or material costs for Bodh's adoption programme are also seen as fairly high cost, compared to the other two programmes. This too will be an area of increased costs, especially in view of the anticipated increase in the number of groups of children, per school, per year. In time, some thinking will have to be done on how the expenses will be met, apart from the designing of partnerships - with governmental or non-governmental agencies.

The MHRD grant appears to be fairly inadequate for the primary school programme and the grant was fixed over 10 years ago, without any inflationary corrections. The teachers in this programme are paid salaries lower than those in the other two programmes, which are also fairly modest in the present market. The quality of the primary school programme is partly suffering on account of this, as teachers do not find it attractive for long and the organisation is unable to maintain a desirable level of work. It is possible that there are some hidden costs in this programme, by way of sharing of materials, staff time and space. **It is therefore important for the organisation to explore other sources of funding this programme for realistic sustenance. This may very well be true for the long term viability of the other programmes as well.**

Table 8

Costs of Bodh projects

April 1995 - March 1996

Line Items	Adoption Programme AKF(I)	Pre-School Programme AKF(I)	Primary School Programme MHRD
Personnel:			
Co-ordinator	15,880*	23,820	35,640
Programme Staff	241,500	361,958	643,218
Support Staff	61,910*	92,865	36,960
Consultants	271,192	180,795	13,000
Training	69,854	47,717	44,000
Supplies	236,958	107,185	44,000
Operations	225,825*	338,736	45,705
Equipment	153,395*	230,093	53,980
Programme Activities	158,265*	237,398	11,172

* These are indirect costs of the programme, estimated to constitute 40% of the total project budget under each head.

Project Outcomes

The preschool programme has been well established by Bodh and makes good use of human resources from the community, in the way that women and girls are being drawn upon as mother and child teachers respectively. It has also clearly fulfilled the specific project objective of developing and implementing a low-cost, community-based preschool education programme in the urban slums and now reaches a total of 662 children in the 3-6 age group. The development of the curriculum and training has also taken place in the course of the last three years, with some interaction with other professionals. The traditional languages/dialects, games, songs, stories and some practices have been incorporated and/or acknowledged in the repertoire of children's pre-school activities. During our visits, the preschool centres reflected energy, interest and fun on the part of everyone - children, teachers, mother and child teachers. The children were very well involved in every activity and their needs and requirements seemed to be catered to in all respects. At the same time, the intervention has been successful in some measure in changing people's misconceptions about education as well as some of their child rearing practices, e.g., people reportedly beat their children much less, pay more attention to their cleanliness and health and no longer consider education a waste of time. **It is therefore recommended that these activities - of curriculum-building and training - and directions taken by the project should on the one hand be continued and strengthened and on the other hand should be considered for documentation and dissemination to a wider audience.**

The adoption programme represents an adaption of the Bodh approach in the wider context of government schools. It has so far brought 785 children of ten government schools into the fold of Bodh. Government teachers trained till now under this programme are 33 of whom 20 are working in the schools under the adoption programme. In operation only since July 1995 the programme is still in its infancy and it is too early to say what the final outcomes will be. It is an intervention into the state system and therefore is understandably constrained by its pressures. However, now that the initial steps of trust-building have been successful, it may be possible to apply some of its methods in greater measure. **Therefore the overall Bodh strategy should direct the evolution of contextual and locally appropriate and feasible strategies for change in the schools covered by the Adoption Programme.** This would be very much in consonance with the philosophy of the organisation that seeks to use local resources - human and material - in support of its work. Implicit in this is a struggle or tension between the wider system, within which the state schools work, and the innovations introduced. For example, there is a tendency to standardise curriculum and teaching methods, which Bodh has been somewhat successful in influencing at the level of the children's groups covered by the programme so far.

Empowering teachers is part of Bodh's overall strategy in training and this is well demonstrated in both the programmes. Greater evidence of teachers' initiative is available in the way curriculum is planned and transacted in the pre-schools compared to the schools under the adoption programme. Nonetheless, the Bodh trained government teachers seemed to be taking much greater initiative than is typical of their peers. The situation is still evolving and will yield tangible results only after some time.

Some research studies have been commissioned by the organization with the involvement of external consultants. One such study was done in 1994 as a means of collecting base-line information from the 6 slums where Bodh worked at the time. Some staff members were associated in the data collection for this research and a draft report is available. This, however, has not reflected the kind of vision and intervention that Bodh stands for and so it has not been used for dissemination. Another draft report is available of a study on cognitive parameters of children's learning abilities and skills, done by a Jaipur-based non-governmental organization, Sandhan. This has focused exclusively on the learning of academic subjects, therefore Bodh has commissioned another study on cognitive parameters.

A few other consultants have been involved in looking at the non-cognitive aspects of government school children's learning and interaction in the school contexts and we were able to attend a preliminary presentation on this. At present, research studies that are underway include the following: a study on non-cognitive parameters; research on socio-economic background of adoption programme schools and children; a psychological study of slum children; and another study of cognitive parameters of children's learning. Some of the available research has provided Bodh personnel with confirmation of their own hypotheses and a systematic understanding of the localities in which they work. In some cases, it is not possible yet to say how these will be used to assist in the work of Bodh. These studies are so far not being used for wider dissemination purposes either. While it is still quite early to make a judgement on the research undertaken as a whole, it nonetheless seems that the programmatic and dissemination needs of Bodh should be well articulated in all of the research studies undertaken. **It is therefore, recommended that any research undertaken by external consultants should be done in close collaboration with the teachers, core group of functionaries and other relevant persons linked to the organization.** The research may thus also take into account the very rich source of information and records of experience maintained by Bodh teachers or functionaries in their diaries, reports and other records. These may very well provide the base-line information needed by the organization to measure its own progress, apart from providing inputs for dissemination as well.

The project has generally made inputs for educationally disadvantaged communities. Within, these the needs of Muslims are also being addressed, in the locality of Amagarh and in the government school of Paharganj, which is part of the adoption programme. **As Muslims constitute a special focus group for the Aga Khan Foundation, this is a notable aspect of the Bodh programmes, which should be built upon in the future.**

Chapter 3

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Bodh initiatives in the slum schools

Slum schools of Bodh represent the outcome of years of untiring effort at establishing credibility in an environment initially characterized by hostility and suspicion. Their sustained effectiveness has been possible because of increasing community involvement and contributions. These slum schools present an interesting model of mobilization of local resources. The manner in which they have evolved has been extensively documented, and they provide very valuable lessons for any future initiative of a similar nature. **These efforts need to be continued, and whatever support required for that needs to be mobilised. Further, the entire documentation on the Bodh experience in the slums needs to be consolidated and presented for dissemination to a wider audience.**

The preschool programme has been successful in developing a model of community participation via the involvement of mother teachers, child teachers, *mahila* and *kishori samoohs*. Models of self-help are emerging in some of the slum schools (e.g. Guru Tegh Bahadur Nagar) and there is a possibility that they may need a reduced quantity of external inputs from Bodh in years to come. Skills and human resources are being generated within some of the slum communities and the organization sees that its future role may be limited to providing technical and training inputs in some places. But there is a continuing need to generate material resources to even maintain some of the Bodh initiatives, as it is not clear whether community participation and ownership will translate into funding from within. **It is therefore recommended that, wherever possible, some funding possibilities be explored for the long term sustainability of the slum-level work.**

On the basis of our observations of classroom situations in Bodh schools, there was some heterogeneity visible in the manner in which Bodh's curricular philosophy was being interpreted by individual teachers. It was not clear whether teachers were able always to communicate the concepts adequately as the children did not seem to understand her demonstration in a few classroom situations observed. Not all activities were being conducted in accordance with the spirit of Bodh's pedagogy. Instead there is scope for introspection about some of pedagogic strategies employed by teachers in Bodh schools.

Through eight years of intense activities in this field, Bodh has generated a repertoire of ideas, devices and methods on curriculum, pedagogy and student-assessment for the various levels of preschool and elementary school which could be applied to any school situation based on a child-centred and activity-centred approach. Some of them are in the form of standard packages of materials. All these form a concrete and tangible outcome of the Bodh programmes so far. **These ideas and materials should be disseminated to a wider audience and possibly replicated.**

Adoption Programme

The school adoption programme, for Bodh, seems to be a test case to explore how far it is possible to bring about major curricular and pedagogic transformations

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in schools in the government system working upwards from the level of the individual classroom. The adoption initiative is based on a conviction that major innovations in the system cannot be effected merely through administrative fiats, but have to go through a rather protracted and slow process of intense interaction with individual teachers, with an aim of building in them the conviction to trigger off such transformations. It is the teachers, the children and the community who, in the ultimate analysis, have to sustain such change. **The project also seeks to demonstrate that there is a legitimate space for micro-level interventions, involving just a few classes, teachers and schools. Not all interventions, perhaps, need to be large scale and systemic to be effective. This experience, however, needs to be documented and shared on a wider platform.**

The possibility of mobilizing community support has still not been fully explored in the government schools under the adoption programme. A possible reason for this, perhaps, is the lack of any kind of tradition of outreach and community participation in the government schools, and the accumulated feeling of alienation that the community has for any government institution. While there are very significant variations of socio-economic background among the schools in the adoption programme, **it may nonetheless be worthwhile to assess what possibilities there are for seeking greater material contribution from the communities and families of the children. This would be particularly important for ensuring the future of this intervention and its long term impact.**

Initiatives such as Bodh's is beginning to make a dent in the system, albeit gradually. A tangible outcome which is unfolding through the school adoption programme is the organic linkage between the government schools and the community. For instance, it was remarkable that in one of the government schools under the adoption programme of Bodh, the head mistress was able to mobilize sizeable funds from the community for renovating the school building. In another school the parents were not averse to providing notebooks or other material. Community involvement that Bodh initiatives are now beginning to elicit will surely prove to be a significant element in the institutional memories of these schools. **This aspect of the adoption programme needs to be strengthened by Bodh along with the other stakeholders of the programme. Furthermore, the overall Bodh strategy should direct the evolution of contextual and locally appropriate and feasible initiatives for change in the schools covered by the Adoption Programme.**

The adoption programme illustrates a model of building and sustaining an intense working partnership between the Bodh functionaries, Bodh teachers and the Bodh-trained government teachers, through a process comprising training programmes, regular workshops and day-to-day planning, sharing and reflection at work. This is a remarkable task accomplished, especially considering the difference in work ethos between the government system and a voluntary organization like Bodh. This partnership has been possible and sustainable also because of the parallel linkages established between Bodh and the higher or middle level echelons of the government. Interestingly the headmasters' meeting that Bodh convenes has provided a forum, perhaps the only one of this kind, for interaction between the headmasters, the inspectors (SDIs) and the district-level officials. Thanks to this, the deliberations of these meetings often cover other areas of concern that the schools and the district officials share, beyond the scope of Bodh activities.

Because of this constant interaction between the schools and the middle level officials, there is awareness and appreciation among the latter for the Bodh

efforts in schools under the adoption programme. This generally supportive attitude of the officials, coupled with the 10 schools' potential to act as resource centres might help in widening the spread of the innovation in the larger government school system, with Bodh providing the training input. Bodh's role so far has been to plant the first seeds for networking and collaboration between the school heads and other relevant arms of the state's bureaucracy. **This will have to be further worked upon and strengthened if it is to emerge in the form of a lobby or advocacy group for better school education in the state.** This is a future direction for Bodh's intervention and goes beyond the boundaries of individual schools, but nonetheless would contribute in a major way towards improving the quality of education.

Bodh as an Organization

Human resource is an outcome too. Bodh has generated a small group of skilled and motivated teachers, both in the slum schools as well as in the government school system, who have a conviction about their curricular and pedagogic approaches, and who have a certain readiness to work in partnership with one another and the community. Apart from the pedagogic skills, many of them are also trained in documentation, planning and social survey. Bodh has also retained, within its own organizational structure, a few who have a sophisticated understanding of the humanistic approach to curriculum and pedagogy that Bodh stands for, and who have valuable field experience. **In the area of organizational management, however, they could do with further capacity building. Owing to the large turnover of staff, Bodh has over the years lost some of these human resources and should therefore consider ways of retaining them in the future programmes and making optimal use of their skills.**

At a broad level, Bodh's own plans for the future are likely to be two-fold: a) strengthening and replenishing of its own model of education for children and b) playing the role of a catalyst for improved education at a wider level. The first represents the inward-looking direction of the organization, as it is not complacent about its achievements but wants to improve upon its practice. The second refers to its role in network building, training and advocacy, which Bodh would like to do in partnership with the government schools, education officials and other relevant bodies and persons. **These are both important directions and Bodh should consider the possibilities of formulating new projects or programmes, develop the necessary organizational and other skills and raise resources for these in the long term.**

So far the organization has depended heavily on the motivation and commitment of individual functionaries. For the long term sustainability of Bodh some formalized organizational arrangements may need to be developed. While the staff do already have skills in some of these, such as, documentation, social survey and coordination of personnel, there is a lacuna in organisational management capacities. Thus Bodh tends to get overtaken by certain exigencies, for example, high teacher turnover. Similarly inadequate responsiveness by the government authorities on matters such as teacher deployment in the adoption programme schools. Such problems take up a lot of Bodh's time and energy. **These indicate the need for greater capacity building in areas of Management Information Systems, more streamlined allocation of portfolios and time and office management. For the moment it appears that the full-time and long-term leadership of the organization is limited to one person. There may thus be a need to address the question of developing a second line of leadership.**

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Training

Through their many years of experience in conducting training programmes, Bodh has developed, within their own organization, expertise related to training in curricular, pedagogic and community-related aspects of school, and have established functional linkages with a network of external experts who are often invited as trainers. The training inputs have been documented in some detail, and they could very well be used to generate training packages. Wider dissemination of Bodh's training model is being attempted in the school adoption programme. **Bodh appears to have a definite future as a training organization in this field. This is an area where Bodh's potentials could be further strengthened, financially as well as programmatically.**

Given the uneven development of skills and abilities among Bodh teachers, there is scope for reviewing the status of the in-house capacities for a range of curricular activities. **A detailed training-need-assessment should, therefore, be undertaken among the teachers, in order that appropriate training strategies may be worked out.**

Bodh trained teachers are considered very well equipped for the progressive programmes underway in the state and are easily absorbed by them. Since the latter also pay better salaries, these are more attractive options especially for the men teachers. Such instances of teacher turnover are considered to be positive outcomes by the organization as the training will be put to good use. **In the light of these impressions, it would be useful for Bodh to record and document as far as possible the reasons for teacher turnover as these may provide insights for possible training linkages with other organizations at a future date. It will also be a useful exercise to establish an alumni network of Bodh trained teachers, to facilitate follow-up and continuing training inputs, and also to develop a wider resource base which Bodh could call upon for specific tasks.**

Bodh trainers are conscious about the need for greater emphasis on basic conceptual clarity with regard to scholastic subjects such as mathematics and science that may need to be incorporated into the training programmes. They feel they may face lesser difficulty in this respect from the government teachers who come for Bodh training, under the adoption programme as they have fairly strong academic skills in their respective disciplines. Thus teaching the older children in classes 4 and 5 is acknowledged as a problem area in the Bodh slum schools. **Working out alternative curricular materials and pedagogic devices for the older children and giving greater emphasis on basic conceptual clarity would, however, have to receive focused attention during future training programmes.**

Research Studies

It is still quite early to make a judgement on the research studies undertaken by Bodh in collaboration with external consultants. Nonetheless it seems that the organization's programmatic and dissemination needs should be well articulated in all such studies. **It is therefore, recommended that any research undertaken with external consultants should be done in close collaboration with the teachers, core group of functionaries and other relevant persons linked to the organization and take account of the rich sources of information and records of experience maintained by Bodh in the form of diaries, minutes, workshop and annual reports.**

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